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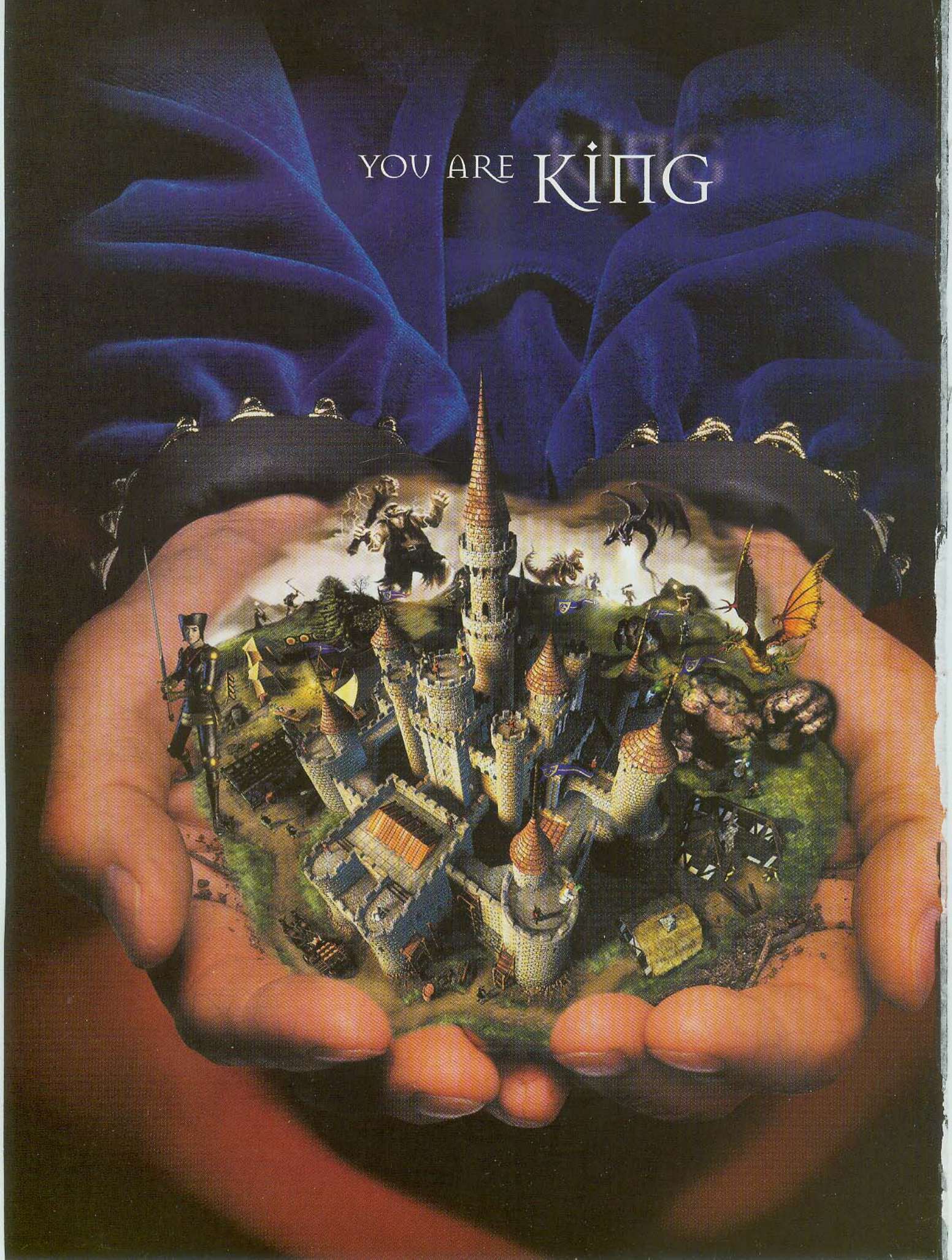
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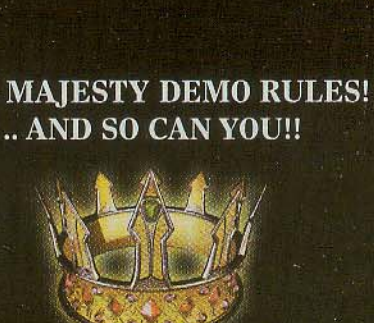

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Into the Wild

Dragon®
Issue # 269 Volume XXIV, No. 10 March 2000

Exclusive Preview

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Rogues and the new D&D® skill system.

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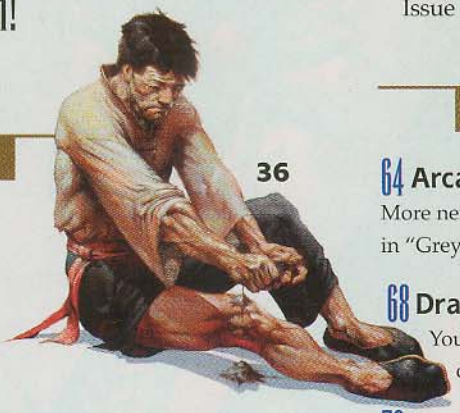

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On the Cover

This month's cover image by Larry Elmore concludes a series of paintings that began nearly nine years ago. It was then that Larry approached us with his concept for The Seasons of the Witch–four paintings, four seasons, four witches. The first was the striking *Dechara's Tree*, an Autumn witch at sunset, for issue #163. Winter followed with *Early Snow* for the cover of issue #188. *Appeasing Karita* for issue #221 was Larry's offering for Spring. Larry painted *Ravenstone*, the final painting of the series, while listening to Loreena McKennit.

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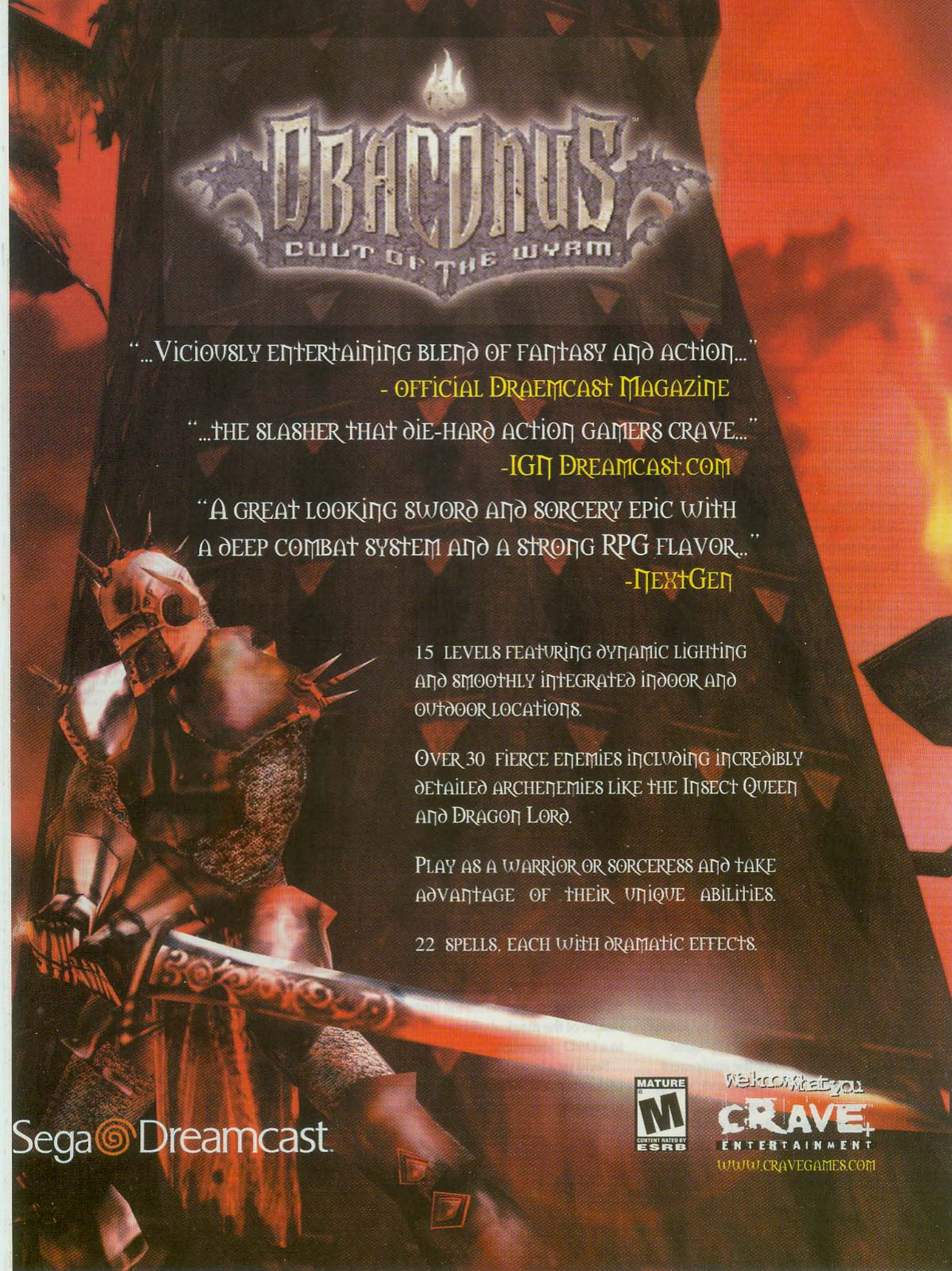
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The Wyrm's Turn™

The Class Menagerie

Players who prefer elves or dwarves sometimes complain that the D&D® game is humanocentric, but who sticks up for the conjurer's weasel or the ranger's black bear? You don't often see someone roleplaying those creatures; more often, animal companions are treated like equipment rather than living creatures.

The problem starts because the player with the animal is usually the one to determine the animal's actions. Unless you're one of those rare individuals who can roleplay both sides of a conversation well, you end up simply declaring what the animal does—which is always what the creature's master desires.

"My hawk flies up to grab the backpack stuck in the tree," says the druid. She doesn't bother to change shape and do it herself; such a menial task is perfect for her feathered retriever. If she'd wanted to do all the fetching, she'd never have cast *speak with animals* and *animal friendship* in the first place.

Dr. Doolittle wouldn't stand out in a D&D® game.

A common alternative to this boring situation is for the DM to play the animal as an NPC. That's a good solution if the group isn't too large and the DM doesn't have many other characters to play. Still, it's a lot more fun when another player takes the role of the animal. Then, the hawk who's told to fetch might simply blink at the neglectful druid until fed a treat or asked more politely. Better yet, the PC and the animal can engage in real dialogue, each of them played by someone who doesn't automatically agree with the other. In short, the equipment finally becomes a character, and "using" it requires some roleplaying.

In addition to our druid's ever-increasing menagerie, our 3rd-Edition playtest campaign includes some pretty freaky "plant companions." Two of our company have living leaf-cloaks as well as prehensile vines that serve as grappling devices. One of our recent opponents was a hideous vampiric vine mass with enough intelligence to fool us for a while. You haven't known real shame until you've been outsmarted by a plant—unless, of course, you've been fooled by a fungus. We're pretty sure that the fungi have been on the up-and-up, but it's hard to tell since they all talk so funny.

Our encounters with the flora of the Arveniar campaign remind us just how blase gamers can be about the fantastic. When you think about it, isn't it pretty amazing to talk with a wolf—much less a toadstool? Yet in the D&D game, these actions can seem so commonplace that we lose our sense of wonder about them. How do you keep such frequent fantastic events from becoming mundane?

Our DM jolted us out of complacency by making the myconids talk funny and playing them as emotionally detached from human concerns. That was a step in the right direction, but there must be more ways to emphasize the fantastic nature of the magical plants and animals in a D&D campaign.

Send us a letter to let us know what tricks you've used to keep the fantastic in your flora and fauna.

Dave Gross, *Editor*

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Afraid of the Art

Well, I've had a month to read last month's issue of *DRAGON® Magazine* (#264) and compose my thoughts concerning the material therein. What I want to address is the "Countdown to 3rd Edition." Of the ten new rules I found, there was only one that I didn't really feel one way or the other about (the initiative rule). Of the remaining nine excellent ideas, six are used by my group regularly as house rules. I'm quite excited for next August's release.

However, I was a little disheartened to see three particular examples of Todd Lockwood's art: the two fighters and the mage in connection with the caption that 3rd Edition will update the look of the D&D® game. The look of the game has always been updated as a result of new artists or the ideas of current artists. The fact that Wizards of the Coast is calling attention to this "facelift" causes me some concern. It implies that the art is not just illustration but a driving force of the project. My issue is not with the quality but rather with the style of Lockwood's characters. The quality is fantastic, but looking at the characters I feel as though Mr. Lockwood had a strong desire to substitute a blaster for the fighters' daggers. It puts me in mind of many computer roleplaying games in which the artists know it is a fantasy game but just can't give up the science fiction look.

Now if this style is but one of four or five artists' contributions to the game, or it is simply meant to illustrate the products, then it is just a matter of different tastes from which we, the gamers, can draw. I don't need to play my character with a Lockwood image in my head. Likewise, I realize that "classic medieval" is not the only way for the D&D game to look, but Lockwood's work seems a little too much like *Rifts* to me.

Thus, what concerns me is that the writing will be driven by this quasi-futuristic imagery. It would not be difficult for a DM to scratch out the *razor vambrace +1* and substitute a *short sword +1*. However, if the story line is too deeply influenced by this *Mad Max* look, it becomes much more difficult for a DM to doctor up the module to fit his or her campaign. The product becomes almost useless at this point.

As long as this look is only one of several for the 3rd Edition D&D game and there remain many traditional (Tolkien-like, if you will) elements and products, the D&D game can still suit all gamers wonderfully. However, if 3rd Edition products draw too heavily from this or similar imagery, I believe more than a few gamers will look elsewhere. Please keep in mind that many gamers have played since the 70s and still look for that early-generation feel. I (and those of my gaming group) do not want to play *Elminster: Beyond Thunderdome.*

Mont Andersen
Layton, UT

We asked Todd for a reply, and here it is: "The D&D® game is as it ever was: a core of rules for creating any world. It's still a fantasy game, derived from—but not beholden to—medieval archetypes. DMs (and players) are welcome to disregard anything they don't like. What the new 'look and feel' does is give the product an image identity of its own, and provide a centerline for the art. Not all fighters will look like this (in fact, many in the 3E concept package don't), but there are some qualities that we want to insure that all fighters in the D&D game will have. "

I (and my gaming group) do not want to play *Elminster: Beyond Thunderdome.*

The Designers Must Be Crazy

I have recently become privy to information on some of the changes to the D&D game for 3rd Edition, and I must say that I am shocked and dismayed by what I have heard. Here are some of the changes I have heard about:

1. Thieving skills resolved on a d20 roll: This will take a great deal away from the thief class. Part of what makes D&D thieves cool is that a player can customize the skills of his or her thief by assigning percentage points to the skills.

2. THAC0 done away with: How do you plan on resolving combat? How will you reflect adventurer's increasing skill in combat?

3. Combat system radically altered: Turns are now only a minute or so long, while spell durations remain unaltered and initiative is only rolled once per combat. I sincerely hope you plan on extending the spell durations to account for the shift in the time elapsed during a turn; otherwise, all non-combat spells with durations will be almost useless.

4. New "rush" and "delay" combat options: Rolling initiative only once per combat seems foolish as well. One bad

roll shouldn't dictate the entire combat. And the new "rush" (sacrifice 1 round of combat to go first every round thereafter) and "delay" (sacrifice 1 round of combat to go last every round thereafter) seem foolish. First of all, why would anyone use the delay option? Who wants to go last every round? Second, why would anyone *not* rush? I see combat going something like this: Round one, all PCs rush. All NPCs rush. All monsters rush. Next round and every round thereafter; all actions are resolved simultaneously.

5. Percentile Strength done away with: Strength scores are moved down, so something like a titan now has the Strength score of a 2nd-Edition hill giant. I have no problem with the removal of percentile Strength, but lowering the bonuses so that a 3rd-Edition titan has the equivalent score of a 2nd-Edition hill giant (19) is stupid.

6. And, of course, once 3rd Edition is printed, 2nd Edition will no longer be supported.

If I have been correctly informed, and the changes I mentioned are indeed taking place, I can assure you that neither myself nor those I game with will ever buy a 3rd-Edition product.

Michael Craig
Campbell, OH

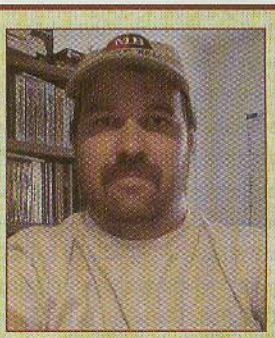
Don't worry, Michael: You will like the 3rd Edition much more than you expect. Most of the "information" to which you've become privy belongs *in a privy! For instance:*

1. Rogues (the new name for thieves) still have the ability to customize their thief skills. In fact, they have more choices in 3rd Edition. Check out our "Countdown" next month for more details on rogues and the skill system.

2. "THAC0" is gone only because it's replaced by a much simpler attack bonus. The concept of rolling 1d20 and adding your bonuses to hit is still in there; it's just more elegant in the new edition.

3. The design team was thinking the same thing you were when balancing combat and spell durations. While we don't address that issue specifically in this month's coverage of wizards and spellcasting, trust us that it works! And if you don't believe us, keep an eye out for our playtesters' feedback coming up in a few months.

DM of the Month



DM of the Month: Chris Carroll

My DM has been running a FORGOTTEN REALMS® game online at www.wizards.com/chat for over a year. He has done a spectacular job since the other DM (who also did a fantastic job) had to take time away from the game.

The Crystal Truths campaign (www.crystaltruths.com) has seen characters come and go, but there is never a dull moment! We game every Sunday from 6–9 P.M. (sometimes until 10) in the Xak room at Wizards Online. Folks are invited to come by and watch.

DM_BlackS (as he is known online) knows how to keep the plot moving, the action hot, and the fun going strong from week to week. **—Rob Brooks**

I cannot think of anyone who would deserve this honor more than the DM I have in *The Crystal Truths* game. His dedication to the game is astonishing. DM_BlackS has not only put together a great story line with numerous plot twists and intrigue, but he has balanced it with a healthy dose of combat. Lately he has amazed us even more as his hobby of computer-assisted drawing has transferred to the game. He's done numerous shots of the areas in which we've adventured and of the people we've met. In an online game, such pictures are a priceless luxury. **—Steve March**

4. As for the combat options, keep in mind that you've read only the tip of the iceberg. In the new Player's Handbook, *you can see how they're balanced. The new initiative system made us blink at first, too, but wait until you try it! It made believers of us—and of hundreds of playtesters, too.*

5. No, giant and titan strengths aren't scaled down in 3rd Edition. Quite the contrary: A titan's strength is a whopping 37! Giants and other gigantic creatures are more formidable than ever.

6. Yes, when August comes around, we'll be supporting 3rd Edition exclusively. Just like the transition from 1st to 2nd Edition, however, that won't leave 2nd Edition players completely without resource; they'll simply have to convert rules statistics if they want to keep playing the older edition. We're betting that most—and likely you, too, Michael—won't want to go back once they've tried 3rd Edition.

Cheers for "Dungeoncraft!"

Ray Winninger's "Dungeoncraft" articles every month are excellent. I love his simple "Four Rules of Dungeoncraft," as they're not complex concepts to remember, yet they're incredibly useful! It can feel overwhelming at times when, as a fledgling DM, you're trying to juggle all the disparate aspects of the game, attempting to create something fun yet realistic, logical yet fantastic, that everyone can enjoy.

I'm almost 30—I've been involved with the D&D game since I was 10—and I *just* started DMing for a small group. I'm kicking myself—why did I wait so long? Now that I've worn the referee's mantle, I can't get enough! The feeling of power, control, and responsibility is utterly addictive … and, thanks to Ray, much easier to accomplish. Thanks, "Dungeoncraft!"

Name Withheld
wraith_form@yahoo.com

Fans of the "Dungeoncraft" column who don't already read the best source of D&D® adventures should watch for the May/June issue of DUNGEON® Adventures, *in which Ray puts his money where his mouth is and shows you exactly how to create an adventure by designing one based on all of his advice of the past year.*

He's Hearing "Voices"

I got the most recent issue of *DRAGON® Magazine* as soon as the local bookstore put it on the shelves and was happy to find "The Voice" waiting for me in the ARES™ section. I have to admit, not being a fan of *The X-Files* and similar projects, I did not know whether I was going to enjoy this mini-adventure.

However, I was pleasantly surprised with the solo game.

Like those sneaky educational cartoons they used to play when I was a kid, this adventure managed to entertain while simultaneously covering a lot of the game's basic rules. In fact, I plan on letting some friends of mine play "The Voice" to show them just how easy the ALTERNITY® system is to learn. It is without a doubt one of the best roleplaying games ever. Thanks again for a great adventure, and please keep this sort of thing coming.

Daron Patton
Wallins, KY

We've had strong responses to the recent ALTERNITY coverage, especially in the Annual. Rather than summarize them, we'll let the next two letters provide the point and counterpoint (with one small correction).

Having the PC turn traitor was just plain, out-and-out cheating by the DM.

I Want my ALTERNITY!

First let me start off by saying that I do indeed love your magazine, but I have a very big problem with it as it relates to the ALTERNITY game. *DRAGON Magazine* covers every possible angle of the AD&D game—as well it should—but, you now have the ALTERNITY game. Why are you even bothering to support the game in *DRAGON Magazine* if you're only going to give it a few pages each month. Almost every issue has at least one article in it, but it is always in the back, the last thing to be read.

This, however, is not the problem. The game is still new, and I realize this, but how about giving it some real exposure? By this I mean having more than one article to support it each month.

There are a billion things to write about. Where are the articles? Where are the fun new things for the game? I love the AD&D game and always will. I have been a DM for more then fifteen years, and I will always play. But the ALTERNITY game is also a great game. Where is its exposure? Are you short on people willing to write ALTERNITY articles? If so, email me and I'll send you some. You have a great game, and all we want is for you to "show us the articles."

Each month I look forward to the new *DRAGON Magazine*, only to be disappointed by finding only one thing written about the ALTERNITY game. Why bother to purchase *DUNGEON Adventures* when it won't even consider an adventure for the ALTERNITY game? *[Au contraire!* DUNGEON Adventures *does indeed consider (and print)* ALTERNITY *adventures—just not every issue. —Dave]* It basically comes down to this. You have two great games, so start showing it. The AD&D game rules, but the ALTERNITY game is here to stay. How about catering to those who play it, because when you do more will follow and start playing. It's that simple.

James Covell
29764 Woodward Ave.
Royal Oak, MI 48073

Not Enough AD&D Material

I have been a subscriber to *DRAGON Magazine* for the past decade, and I am afraid that if I had to renew my membership now, I would not. *DRAGON Magazine* has increasingly become diluted with non-D&D material such as for the ALTERNITY game and MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Adventure Game. For instance, in the 1999 Annual there were a total of 54 pages of non-D&D material. What next? MAGIC: THE GATHERING® articles or Hasbro TRANSFORMER articles? I would appreciate if you market the ALTERNITY game at your own expense and don't force your subscribers to foot the advertising bill for this game. If *DRAGON Magazine* wants to retain a strong identity among gaming magazines, I would suggest limiting non-D&D material to less than 15% of the content of any issue.

John Oliver
Boston, MA

As Bill Cosby points out, the quickest path to failure is to try to please everyone. Nevertheless, we'll keep trying to please most of the people most of the time.

For the near future, expect us to stay the course and present one ALTERNITY article each issue. This summer, however, we might have another way of presenting even more ALTERNITY articles while making DRAGON Magazine *even more purely the D&D resource. How can that be? Keep your eyes on these pages, and we'll give you the scoop as soon as our cunning plan can't be stopped by those meddling kids!*

We're Just Wrong, Wrong, Wrong!

I wish to strongly disagree with the message sent out in "THE WYRM'S TURN™: Special Guest Star" column from issue

Nodwick
By Aaron Williams
LOOKS LIKE WE NEED SOME MAGIC TO GET ACROSS.
NODWICK, HAND ME MY WAND OF LEVITATION.
I CAN'T.
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE, YOU HANDED ME ALL THAT JEWELRY FROM THE LAST HAUL. TO SAVE SPACE, I PUT ALL OF THE RINGS ON. I GUESS ONE OF THEM MADE ME AND YOUR STUFF INVISIBLE.
SO TAKE THE RINGS OFF!
UM, I CAN'T DO THAT, EITHER. I'M HAVING PROBLEMS LOCATING MY FINGERS.
WHY?
WELL, I WAS THIRSTY, AND I FOUND OUT THAT MY "YOO-HOO" AND YOUR POTION OF RANDOM POLYMORPH COME IN AMAZINGLY SIMILAR BOTTLES...
www.nodwick.com

#265. Since the villainous PC was introduced as many guest players are, having the PC turn traitor was just plain, out-and-out cheating by the DM. It will lessen the fun for everyone, especially upcoming new and guest players.

It is an unspoken rule of all party-based roleplaying games that the new or guest player be allowed to play with a bit of roleplaying acceptance. Since our characters' time is not as limited as our gaming time, it is assumed that the investigation and assimilation of new characters is done with a minimum of roleplaying in the interests of moving the game forward. The DM, and the guest PC, broke this rule and thus forfeited this bond of trust with the players.

Let's look at a similar situation some months down the line. An old friend of the DM's moves into town and wants to play. However, the only character he has is a thief (or a druid, a mercenary, or a neutral wizard...). The party figures they already have a good enough thief, and they just can't trust anyone any longer. They decline to let the player join the group. Now the poor newcomer has to just sit there and watch. He is no longer welcome with the sort of gamers' camaraderie we have all come to expect. Is this fair? Is this fun? *No!*

The point of the second anecdote of the editorial is also wrong. Why should a player get bonus XPs for his next character for good roleplaying? Now, if you let the character play that doppleganger as a PC, the bonus XPs are fair.

Darrold Dan Wagner
San Jose, CA

Perhaps we should feel chastened, but neither Chris nor Dave feels particularly wrong about pulling a fast one over the PCs. Why should the DM use a special guest star to betray the PCs? Why should a traitor PC gain bonus XPs for his next character?

Because it's fun.

That is, if it's fun, then it's perfectly okay. If, as Darrold's group feels, it's unfair and not at all fun, then don't try those tricks at home. Instead, stick with the doppleganger PCs ... as long as it's fun!

Calling Dr. Science

I really love the magazine, and I don't want to seem like a nit-picker, but I'm bored out of my skull at the moment, so here goes.

I found a few mistakes in issue #266, the largest one in the "Ecology of the Xixchil." In footnote #24, it says that xixchil are very practical and believe form follows function. What is the function in covering one's body with tattoos and rings and such? Expressing individuality doesn't really justify the time, effort, and resources spent on these things.

Another was in the "Back to the Future" article, specifically the Exeter-class flying saucer template. U-238 is depleted uranium (non-radioactive) and can't be used in atomic fission. U-235 is what you're looking for.

The last was in the "Dragons Bestiary" article. The shadkyn's morale is listed as 1112. That's one confident werebat.

Gabe Ytterberg
Address Withheld

We figured that xixchil find taking money for tattoo work on other races eminently practical, so we won't cop to that rap.

On the other hand, we should have known better than not to fact-check an article by someone whose scientific research consisted of watching several hundred episodes of Mystery Science Theater 3000. *On the other hand, it's kind of appropriate to get the science wrong in an article on flying saucers and jetpacks.*

The shadkyn's morale should be 11–12, of course. Pesky, unreliable en-dashes!

Say It Ain't So!

Living in the Milwaukee area my entire life, I have had the wonderful opportunity of having the GEN CON® Game Fair practically in my back yard. It came to my attention on Thanksgiving that Wizards of the Coast is planning to move the convention to Indianapolis. I hope this is

The RPGA® Network Introduces the LIVING GREYHAWK™ Campaign

Last month we hinted that hardcore GREYHAWK® campaign material would be making a comeback, and now we have more details, courtesy of *POLYHEDRON® Newszine* Editor Erik Mona:

At the GEN CON® Game Fair 2000, the RPGA Network introduces the next step in the evolution of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® gameplay—the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign. The debut of the 3rd Edition D&D® game provides a fantastic backdrop for this exciting shared-world project. Players from all over the world can join forces to explore the entire GREYHAWK setting in this open-ended campaign.

The LIVING GREYHAWK campaign emphasizes character development and roleplaying through sanctioned events at home and at conventions and game days held throughout the world. Additionally, LIVING GREYHAWK players have the chance to play selected D&D and *DUNGEON® Adventures* modules as part of an integrated, international campaign. The LIVING GREYHAWK campaign is full of adventure, ruthless politics, daring dungeons, fantastic escapes, and of journeys to exotic lands. Whether you're a fan of the GREYHAWK setting or simply want to join a campaign of thousands of gamers, LIVING GREYHAWK is your destination for adventure. For more information, visit the "Campaigns" section of http://www.rpga.com.

just another dirty rumor. When Wizards of the Coast acquired TSR, Wisconsin lost part of the soul of its gaming population. TSR and its wonderful history are a part of us all here, and we miss their presence. We are grateful we were left with the game fair. Rumors circulated for some time that the con would be moved to Washington, which—thankfully—proved false. I can only hope that Indianapolis is only another in the series. If the con is moving to Indianapolis, I doubt I will be able to attend regularly, but at least it's not Washington.

Chris Orsina
Saukville, WI

The GEN CON Game Fair will indeed move to Indianapolis, but not until 2003. We'll miss Milwaukee, too, but the fact is that the convention has grown too big for that city. The events organizers needed to find a city with more available hotel space. Here are some more useful facts about the move in 2003:

- *Indianapolis is accessible to 2/3 of the country's population rather than the 1/3 to which it's exposed now.*
- *The Convention Center has over three times the amount of usable meeting space, and 30,000 more parking spaces.*
- *Indianapolis offers 3,500 hotel rooms within a 4-block radius of the site, while Milwaukee had only 2,060.*
- *The hotel rates offered for the 2003 show are comparable to those offered in Milwaukee now.*
- *The Indianapolis show will offer more than 3,500 events, more than could occur in the Milwaukee facilities.*
- *The Game Fair remains in August, but it moves to the third week to put it closer to Labor Day and vacation time.*
- *Until 2003, the Game Fair continues in Milwaukee on the following dates:*

2000	*August 10–13*
2001	*August 2–5*
2002	*August 8–11*

A Friendly Warning

I just wanted to give a response to a response. In *DRAGON Magazine* issue #265, Steven Russell asked, why are gnomes and halflings always bunched together? I understand that, but what got me was your answer: *You're not afraid of them! What's the worst a halfling's going to do about it?*

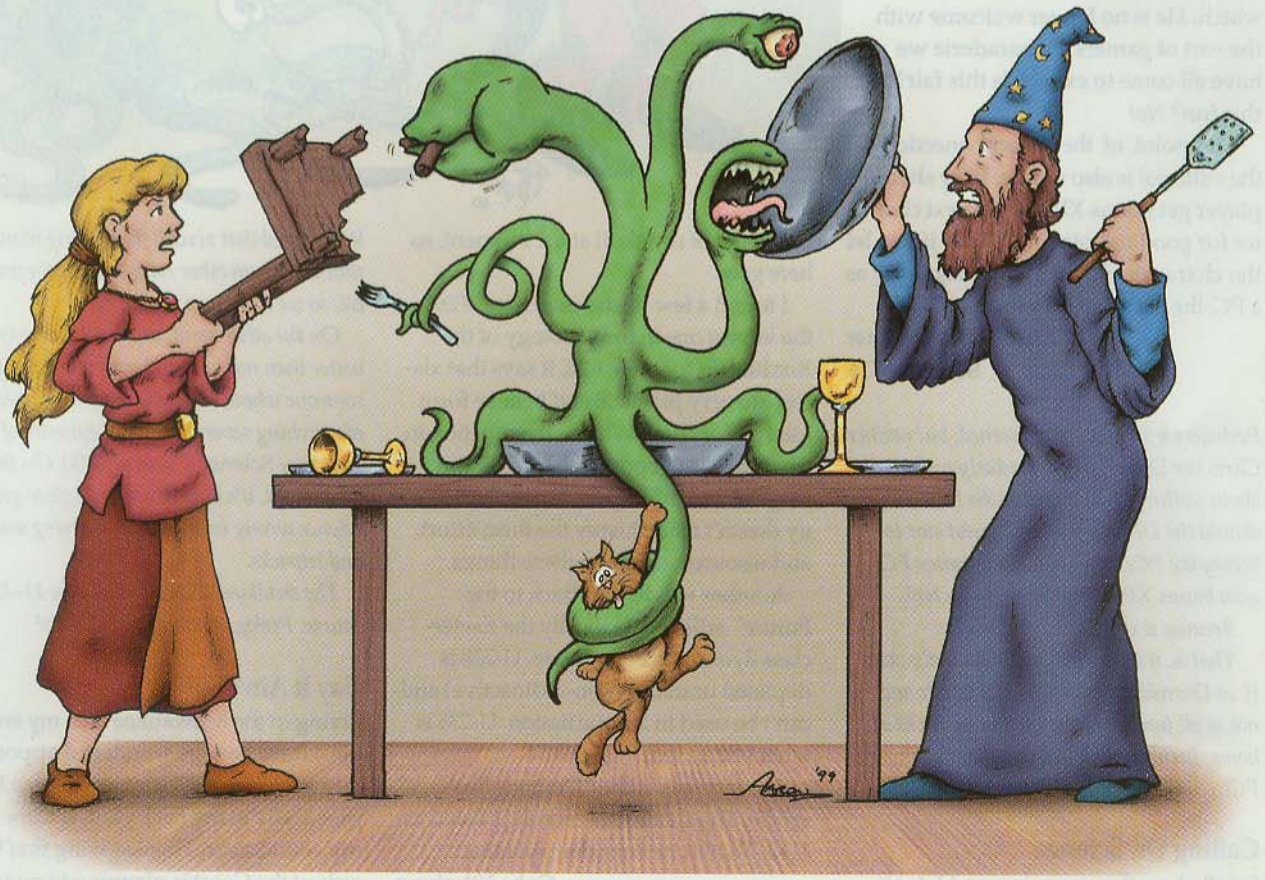
Well, I just want to say that you should watch your back from now on, 'cause halflings are dangerous.

Ed Perez
354 Hunter Street
Ossining, NY 10562

Thanks to Ed's timely warning, we checked outside and spotted a small (heh) troop of halflings who had been skulking through the ivy. Unfortunately for them, they found the local bunny burrow and were in full retreat by the time we arrived with our brooms and rolled-up newspapers.

On the other hand, should anything unfortunate happen to any of the editors, now you'll know whom to investigate first!

For more bunching of halflings and gnomes together, check out this month's episode of "The New Adventures of Volo."



By Aaron Williams

"No offense, dear, but this is the last time I let you cook dinner!"

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Convention Calendar

March

ConJuration 5
March 10–11 *
Shatner Building,
3480 McTavish St.
Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
Website:
http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/gamers/guild.htm
Email: mcgillgamers@hotmail.com

CosCon 2K
March 10–12 PA
Days Inn Conference Center, Butler, PA.
Contact: Circle of Swords
P.O. Box 2126
Butler, PA.

Princecon XXV
March 17–19 NJ
Whig Hall, Princeton University,
Princeton, NJ.
Contact: Princecon 25
107 John E. Busch Ave.
Somerset, NJ 08873.
Website: princetongames.org/princecon/

Stellar Con 24
March 17–19 NC
Ramada Inn and Conference Center,
High Point, NC.
Contact: StellarCon 24
Box 4, Elliott University Center
UNCG
Greensboro, NC 27412.
Website: www.uncg.edu/student.groups/sf3/stelllarcon.htm^

SteelCon 2000
March 24–26 OK
Holiday Inn, Stillwater, OK.
Email: ivorystl@ionet.net

MidSouthCon 18
March 24–26 TN
Sheraton Four Points Hotel,
Memphis, TN.
Contact: MidSouthCon 18
P.O. Box 11446
Memphis, TN 38111-0446.

April

Egyptian Campaign 2000
March 31–April 2 IL
Southern Illinois University,
Carbondale, IL.
Contact: Egyptian Campaign 2000
c/o SIUC Strategic Games Society
Office of Student Development
Carbondale, IL 62901-4425.
Email: ECGamCon@aol.com
Website: www.siu.edu/~gamsoc

MegaCon 2000
March 31–April 2 FL
Expo Center,
Orlando, FL.
Contact: Beth Warden
4023 Tampa Rd.
Oldsmar, FL 34677.
Website: www.megaconvention.com
Email: beth@megaconvention.com

URICON IX
March 31–April 2 RI
Memorial Union,
University of Rhode Island,
Kingston, RI.
Contact: URICON IX
Attn: Neail Tanner
67 Upper College Rd.
Kingston, RI 02881.
Website: http://opus.acc.uri.edu/GamingClub/
Email: gameclub@etal.uri.edu

Imagi-Con IV
April 1 PA
Kehr Union Building, Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, PA.
Contact: The Role Playing Guild
Box 8, Kehr Union Building
Bloomsburg University
Bloomsburg, PA 17815.
Email: bloomu_rpg@yahoo.com

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *Dragon® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2985 (U.S.A.).

Important: *Dragon Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention
✳ Canadian convention
✪ European convention
💻 Online convention

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Roundcon 2000

April 7–9 **SC**
Travelodge Suites, Columbia, SC.
Contact: Roundcon 2000
1119 Flora Drive
Columbia, SC 29223-5222
Website: www.uscrtgs.org

CODCON V

April 14–16 **IL**
SRC 2800,
College of DuPage,
Glen Ellyn, IL.
Contact: James Allen.
Email: allenj@cdnet.cod.edu

ImagineCon 2000

April 20–23 **VA**
Virginia Beach Pavilion,
Virginia Beach, VA.
Contact: John Prescott
or Dennis Hanson.
Email: info@imaginecon.com

OurCon 2000

April 28–30 **MA**
UMass Campus Center, Amherst, MA.
Contact: OurCon
RSO 178-416 SUB
UMass, MA 01003.
Website: http://ourcon/tripod.com
Email: ourcon@hotmail.com

May

Fantasy Fair X

May 21
The Cresset Exhibition Centre,
Peterborough, UK.
Contact: 5 Arran Close
Holmes Chapel
Cheshire
CW4 7QP
United Kingdom.

MISCON 2000

May 26–28 **MT**
Double Tree Hotel Edgewater,
Missoula, MT.
Contact: MISCON
P.O. Box 7721
Missoula, MT 59807.

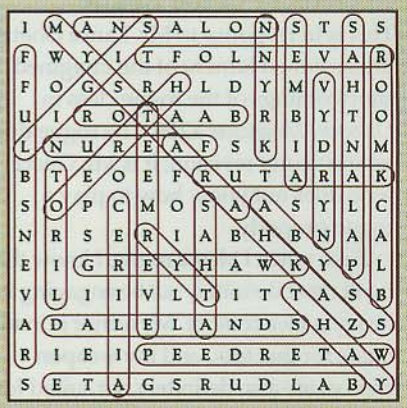
June

Milwaukee Summer Revel 4

June 15–18 **WI**
Sheraton Milwaukee,
Milwaukee, WI.
Contact: Milwaukee Summer Revel
P.O. Box 779
New Munster, WI 53152.
Website: www.rli-net
/~melka/msr/index.htm

no. 9 SOLUTION

1	ABYSS	14	MYSTARA
2	ANSALON	15	NYR DYV
3	ATHAS	16	OERTH
4	BAATOR	17	PALANTHAS
5	BALDUR'S GATE	18	RAVENLOFT
6	BLACKMOOR	19	RAVENS BLUFF
7	CERILIA	20	SEMBIA
8	DALELANDS	21	SIGIL
9	EVERMEET	22	THAY
10	FAERUN	23	TORIL
11	GREYHAWK	24	TYR
12	KARA-TUR	25	WATERDEEP
13	KRYNN	26	ZAKHARA



The message spelled out in the unused letters is,
"IT'S WORLDS OF POSSIBILITIES."

Gamer's Guide

www.arduin-delos.com
Handbook of Traps & Tricks
Dragon Tree Spell Book
Arduin Grimoires IV-VIII
$11.95 each + $3 / order
Dragon Tree Press
POB 1209, Guerneville, CA 95446

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Rat Brain
www.battlefieldearth.com
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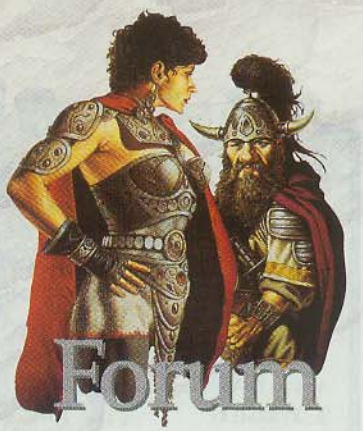

Forum

Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," *DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com.* Include your full name and mailing address; we won't print a letter sent anonymously. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

WHAT'S THE MOST UNUSUAL WAY YOU'VE USED OR ENCOUNTERED A DRAGON IN YOUR CAMPAIGN?

In Defense of the Rogue

This is in response to Mr. Lance Goetz's impassioned lament of the imagined shortcomings of the rogue class in *DRAGON Magazine* #266. The rogue does not need any revision; it is Mr. Goetz who does not know how to play a rogue properly.

First, when I play a rogue, I know that I will most definitely *not* be engaging in heavy melee combat. My armor is inadequate for that task, and my weapon choices are also definitely not suited for heavy melee combat. If I had wanted to engage in heavy melee combat, then I would have played a warrior or a priest.

Second, when I play a rogue, I will most definitely *not* be exposing myself to the effects of *fireballs, ice storms,* and the like. Spells like that are intended to stop warriors, wizards, and priests. If I had wanted to cast spells, then I would have played a wizard or a priest.

> ***When I play a rogue, I will most definitely not be engaging in heavy melee combat.***

However, I have chosen to play a rogue. I have chosen to play a character who lives by his or her wits, who does not rely on thick armor or a spellbook to save his or her hide but on wits and skill. Above all, I am a *specialist*.

While the warriors, priests, and wizards are engaged in a massive battle with the stone giant clan, who seeks out the important things such as the hoard of exquisite diamonds or the cache of fine rubies that the battered party members will need to procure healing and new supplies back in town? When the party is in town and trying to resupply itself, who has the best contacts for provisions and the like below the market price? When the party is stymied by the raised drawbridge, who is the valiant soul who finds and carefully opens the postern gate?

Who else but that noble fellow, the rogue.

Thomas B. Knoedler
Springfield, IL

Power to the Thieves

Lance Goetz's rant against rogues starts with some faulty premises and goes rapidly downhill from there. He begins by defining the roles of the various classes: warriors are the big melee guns, wizards are the big spell guns, and clerics are an interesting mix of melee and spells (and let's not forget the all important healing spells). So far, so good. But then Lance takes a right turn down Highway 66 and disappears over the horizon as he attempts to convince us that the rogue (or, more specifically, the thief) has no defined role in the game.

Excuse me? Has Lance not been reading *Knights of the Dinner Table?*

He postulates a situation involving going down into the Abyss and confronting Lolth. "If you had to do it with no characters from one of the four basic classes, which could you do without? The answer is always obvious—the thief." Well, yes. If you walk up to Lolth's face and say, "You and me!" then you don't want to be playing the thief. By the same token, if you're challenging the court magician to a magical duel, then you don't want to be playing a fighter.

If, on the other hand, you want to get to Lolth alive and in one piece, you're probably going to be more than happy with the thief who manages to sneak through the shadows, steal the key to the dungeon containing the *arrow of Lolth slaying,* disarm the trap guarding the *arrow,* and then escape without alerting the Type VI demons (or am I in the wrong edition again?) to his presence.

Lance goes on to write that "Rogues are continually in conflict and should be prepared to deal with it."

And right there is his problem. Rogues should *never* be in combat. They aren't built for it. That isn't what they're good at. If you expect them to do more than supply the tactical backstab here and there, then you're going to be disappointed every single time. If "Pick Pockets, Tunneling, and Open Locks … are not useful under many conditions," then that is the fault of the DM, or a lack of imagination on the part of the player. Have you never had to pick the pocket of an diplomat to get an all-important document? Have you never had to pick a lock in the local dungeon? Or perhaps to escape from the cell the Evil Overlord has thrown you into?

I begin to suspect that we're looking at a campaign in which non-combat scenarios are rare. For example, how else would warriors' abilities "allow them to be useful at nearly all times" unless the party is involved in combat "at nearly all

times"? The thief's time in the spotlight comes outside of combat—and if your campaign is nothing but a string of random encounters, then the thief (naturally) has no place in your campaign. But it doesn't make any sense to change the class because Lance Goetz is playing in a campaign in which the class doesn't make much sense. It wouldn't make any more sense to revamp the priest classes because I don't have any gods in my campaign setting.

Lance proceeds to demonstrate how other classes can perform the thief's role (more or less). "Indeed, a mid-level mage, with a carefully chosen selection of spells, can perform a thief's role." Well, yes. And a mid-level cleric with the right combo of spells can usually end up spotting a fighter if the need arises. The point is that by having a fighter, you can have your cleric focus on other things. And by having a thief, your mage can memore *fireball* spells instead of *invisibility* (to sub for Hide in Shadows).

Lance then complains that, to create a stealth-based character, you need to use the thief class as a base. He claims that the class is "defined by thieving." Perhaps he needs to reread the rules—as the player he gets to define how effective his character is at various tasks. There is no need to address "the character's propensity to steal ... through kits," because you already have the ability to specialize the thief any way you want. I've seen "thieves" who would have been totally inept at picking pockets but who were great at scouting out the enemy encampments. "Thief" is a label, and changing the name to something else (particularly "operative" or "commando"—this is the AD&D® game, not a James Bond movie) is probably not worth the cost to a 30-year-old tradition.

Justin Bacon
Minneapolis, MN

On Magic and Magic-users

I have been playing the AD&D game since it debuted and game-mastering most of my adult life. The spellcasting system for magic-users, unlike that of the other spellusers in the game, is supposedly based on (or at least inspired by) the fantasy writings of Jack Vance, which I have read for inspiration on several occasions. This basis could be interpreted in many ways for fantasy roleplaying; here is one such derivative.

I have experimented with "spell-points," proficiencies, and even "magical accreditation" concepts, but I wasn't truly satisfied with what I had wrought after the playtesting was done, much less being able to explain these house rules to others. That was until a colleague, Lance K. Wollwage, gave me the following suggestion: The act of casting magical spells, as wizards and mages do, must consume calories, even if most of the energy for the spell is being supplied through the cabalistic practice of arcane arts. I pondered this and found the idea sound, and more importantly, compatible with the existing game mechanics. I determine the "magical fitness" of a magic-user character by determining the average of the following character attributes: Intelligence, Wisdom, and Constitution. I include Wisdom in this equation because I believe that this attribute, in combination with the other abilities, is a way to reflect the difference between a wise mage and a rash wizard. I utilize this number to moderate situations in which the high-level mage (with no memorized spells left at his or her disposal) must cast a simple spell *in extremis*, the low-level apprentice tries to cast a unknown high-level spell, or other situations in which the roleplaying activity is outside the bounds of the rules as written. I have found that the idea of spell-work having a basis, at least in part, in something as tangible as the consumption of calories allows for a solid foundation on which players and DMs can develop the mental framework that is so important to fantasy roleplaying.

Chad Akins
Tacoma, WA

The act of casting magical spells, as wizards and mages do, must consume calories ...

Clerical Concerns

The 3rd Edition D&D® game presents the opportunity to fix one of the most disappointing oversights in the AD&D magic system—clerical magic.

The magic for wizards is intriguing, different, and fits both the AD&D class and the image of wizards. It is easy enough to imagine wizards poring over old tomes, sometimes for hours, preparing complex spells for later use. Far from being a simple skill powered by an amorphous pool of mana points, the casting of magical spells in the AD&D game requires the mage to memorize specific spells from a wide list, choosing with forethought that day's spells. When each is finally cast, the spell is gone. Each DM is free to explain why. My favorite rationale is that the complex memorization process is the actual summoning of magical energy and the spell casting merely its release. This neatly explains why wizard spells don't fail and why they can't just be cast again. Sure, the mage knows what he or she just said to release the spell, and an experienced wizard can repeat the verbal and somatic components ad nauseam, but the power backing the spell is gone. Go a step further and make the memorization process a dynamic one by changing what needs to happen during memorization based on the season, conjunction of spheres, present location, flowers in bloom, and so on, and you quickly see why casting a wizard spell isn't like riding a bike.

Clerical magic, on the other hand, has never been well developed. A priest typically draws energy from a sentient force with which there is an implied agreement or outright bargain, unlike the impersonal energy powering a mage's spell. A priest whose faith wavers, represented by a low Wisdom, can fail to cast a spell properly. Given the personal relation between deity and priest and the natural effect it would have on priestly magic, there is no earthly reason why a priest should have to memorize spells beforehand. The priest is calling on an intelligent force for aid, and of course that force will respond when possible—the only limit is the cleric's own strength of belief. Memorization appears as little

more than a pale copy of the wizard requirement and should be done away with outright. The use of spheres naturally limits a priest's choice of spells, whereas a mage can try to learn any spell available. Thus the smaller clerical spell selection, as well as the more tightly focused effect of the spells inherent in grouping them by type, balances the proposed ability to choose a spell just prior to casting it. This also means clerics don't have to walk around with numerous healing spells memorized. If called for, the priest can cast a healing spell if he or she has one of that level left. If, however, the player thinks it is more appropriate to have a character cast a *command* spell now instead of saving it for a *cure light wounds* later, then the player can make that decision. Such choices would help enliven the priest class for the player and free him or her from the burden of toting around healing spells that might never get used but have to be memorized just in case.

This one change—removing the memorization requirement from the priest class—would help set priestly magic apart dramatically, both in style of play and in the imagined world. One of the 3rd Edition hints was about swapping any clerical spell for a healing ability; this is certainly useful, but it is only fitting for priests who have healing as part of their makeup. Furthermore, limiting the switching of spells to a healing ability smacks of a rule invented purely for game design reasons. By simply removing the memorization requirement for priests, the ability to cast healing spells when needed—as well as any other spell in the cleric's repertoire—is provided at the same time the vision of clerical magic is strengthened and differentiated from wizardly magic. Since the hints aren't exactly like the new rules, I can hope the 3rd Edition design team has already changed this one flaw in an otherwise unique and viable magic system.

Gregory Rick
Cambridge, MA

Email in RPGs

Regarding the Question of the Month from issue #266: "How do the players in your game contribute between sessions? Is email a part of your role-playing campaign?"

If ever a question was suited to my campaign, this was it! From the beginning, players have been encouraged to contribute backgrounds, stories, poetry, artwork, and even opinions of the other characters between sessions. As time has gone on, I've invited players to help detail the world, writing "ancient" tales of the land, folk stories, and even epic poetry. We usually make it character specific—the fighter designs a watch order and a marching order, the bard writes an epic poem that opens with the cleric casting *speak with dead*, the shaman writes stories of the spirits, and the ranger writes of long journeys in the open wilderness.

While at first I was afraid the game might be spoiled for some of the players—they might begin to feel like they know everything there is to know about the world—the effect was the opposite. They have a lot of time and energy invested in the campaign world and learn things as players that they would know as characters. It's been a great system both for fleshing out the setting and for giving the players the knowledge they need to play their characters as people in a real, functioning society. The fact that I offer an experience award might also have an impact. Of course, they're doing some of my work, so I suppose I should give them something.

As for email and the Web, we use them constantly. I've put up a website for the game where players post their stories and opinions, and where I've established an "evaluation" form so players can tell me about the game and critique it for me. Not only does this allow me to improve my own DMing skills but also it provides the players a quick and confidential way to let me know what they're up to. It's rare that a disagreement festers, since the players have a venue for their opinions.

Now that I've seen what working in-between games can do for the players, I don't think I'll ever go back.

Christian Tomsey
Milwaukee, WI

Turning it Upside Down

I would like to share my campaign's upside-down cliché with you. A few months ago, I picked up a copy of the *World Builder's Guidebook* from my local gaming shop. I decided to make a world for the AD&D game, and I was very satisfied with my results. My campaign is set in an enclosed desert planet called Deshomar, where kobolds are the dominant race instead of humans. Surprisingly, the kobolds are more civilized than the humans are. The humans are raiding the kobolds for water, instead of kobolds raiding the humans. My friends find this to be an interesting twist and enjoy playing in this world.

The other interesting upside-down cliché is that the humans are a very savage race, and they have a form of government called a Clanarchy, which is composed of several different clans, each led by a separate ruler, but none of the clans are allied. The kobolds have a matriarchal, military democracy. In this form of government, the kobolds are lead by female warriors who represent their sub-armies (of course, everyone is affiliated with a sub-army) in a primitive senate. One other interesting twist is that a major race, the mudmen, are actually civilized artisans who set up shop outside major kobold cities. My friends find all of these upside-down characteristics of my campaign to be very interesting and enjoy my campaign.

Cory Herbst
Alexandria, VA

Draining Bites!

I'm writing all the way from England because of something that has bothered me about the AD&D game ever since I picked up those trusty dice and rolled my first character: Level draining strikes fear into all players everywhere. When the characters see that vampire across the room, many simply run to save their lives and the precious 8th-level abilities they have worked so hard to accumulate.

Level draining strikes fear into all players everywhere.

I have hated this ability because, in my mind, it makes no sense and accomplishes nothing but to irritate players. I was once involved in a game with a fairly large group who had been roleplaying together for a long time, working their way to 10th-level in some cases. In one session, two players walked away and went home, their hard-bitten characters having being reduced to farm hands in 2 rounds. It ruined the game and made sure that a bitter enmity existed between those players and a ruthless DM.

What I hate most about this ability is that it makes no sense and bears no relevance to fantasy or legendary examples. "Life energy" as it is called, drained through a connection to the Negative Material plane. Fine, it has a nice explanation to back it up, but it disgusts me because it destroys the personality of one of the most legendary figures in fantasy literature: the vampire.

When has blood, the basic and wholly understood requirement of a modern vampire, ever been linked to experience, fighting abilities and spells, because that is what it has been lumbered under. Surely Constitution is the obvious and most logical measurement of someone's life energy.

James Sheppard
Kent, England

Scrawny PCs

I am writing in response to Justice McPherson's letter in issue #267. While his idea for improving a character's scores is interesting, I have one problem with it: I don't think it is needed at all.

First, consider the examples of a "scrawny 20th-Century computer hacker" going to war. I'm sure it's true that this person would gain physical strength to some degree, but it's just not going to happen as the example makes it sound. I've known many people who go into boot camp and come out looking just as they did when they went in, and I've even seen a few come out looking worse. Also, if his talent is in computer hacking, he is not likely to get a job as a hand-to-hand soldier. He would be more likely to get a desk job.

As to the second example of an AD&D mage, much of the same holds true, only more so. The character is, after all, a mage, so we can probably assume that he has found all sorts of ways to keep from carrying everything: extra-dimensional spaces, minions, traveling spellbooks, and the like. Again, the military isn't going to use their highly trained wizard to do the job of a low-cost soldier. He'd be put to work casting spells, not fighting hand-to-hand.

While it might be more realistic to let ability scores improve in this manner, the AD&D game is, after all, a fantasy game. If stats are allowed to increase with that much ease or frequency, the game changes. No longer will you see players having to roleplay the drawbacks of characters with low stats. You'll see, instead, players doing their best to get them raised by a simple roll of the dice.

If you really want your players to be able to improve their characters in this manner without having to go "*wish* hunting," I suggest you raise the stats on an individual basis. This will also make it possible to deal with things that *are* more likely to increase with age and experience, like Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. For instance, you have a fighter with a somewhat low Intelligence. His player roleplays him well and deals with his low Intelligence. But, in doing so, he has the character make an effort to educate himself with mental puzzles, schooling, or just by chatting with the local mage. This same character, despite his low Intelligence, solves many riddles over the course of a good deal of adventures. Now, in this event, the DM might want to raise the character's Intelligence by one point as a great reward for all the wonderful roleplaying the player has been doing. Or, in addition to all this roleplaying, maybe the character would be allowed to raise his score by one point if he makes a "heroic feat" that we've been hearing so much about from the upcoming 3rd Edition. (This "system" could also be used with any of the other ability scores.) Then again, maybe the good people who make the D&D game for us have already taken care of this. We'll just have to wait and see!

Joseph Hepler
Charleston, SC

He is, after all, a mage, so we can probably assume that he has found all sorts of ways to keep from carrying everything ...

By Aaron Williams

"Dear, I really wish you'd get rid of those things; scale pattern baldness is nothing to be ashamed of."

Rob Lazzaretti

by Stephen Kenson

Rob Lazzaretti never really drew maps when he first started gaming back in high school. "It's weird, I never sat down and drew much out for an adventure—just some rough sketches. The rest just came out of my head when we played." That's certainly changed these days, now that Rob is Art Director of Cartography for Wizards of the Coast.

Born and raised in central Illinois, Rob was introduced to roleplaying games by his father, himself an avid war-gamer. While visiting a hobby shop with his father, Rob discovered the first edition ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® books. "I was instantly hooked," he says. But the game that really drew Rob into the hobby was *Call of Cthulhu*.

"In 1984, my father and I went to the GEN CON® Game Fair in Racine, Wisconsin. There I met Sandy Petersen, and he introduced me to the game. I was really drawn to the imagery."

His interest in the visual elements of gaming led Rob to consider a career as an artist, even though he rarely bothered with maps. "Everybody in my gaming group had me drawing sketches of their characters. In high school, I was the kid drawing all the weird stuff for people I knew, like Iron Maiden album covers on the backs of their jackets. Art always seems to win people over, even if they think you're a geek."

After high school Rob went to Illinois State University and studied fine art, then switched over to design. "I realized I needed something I could actually make money doing," he says with a laugh. His artistic skills and his strong interest in gaming won him an internship with Game Designers Workshop, the company that manufactured games like *Traveller* and *Twilight 2000*. "I couldn't believe my good fortune," Rob says. He worked as an intern at GDW for a year and helped produce new products like *Dark Conspiracy* and *Dangerous Journeys*.

"I basically worked at GDW for free," Rob says, "because working there let me get my feet wet. I had already worked on a multitude of products by the time TSR contacted me after seeing the cartography work I did for the *Dangerous Journeys* game line."

Rob took a job with TSR's art department in 1993 and immediately began working on the PLANESCAPE® campaign setting. "It was a big responsibility. I hadn't done posters before, and suddenly I was doing a ton of them. Huge poster-sized maps. I couldn't believe how many there were. [TSR artist] Dennis Kauth was kind of my teacher, and he really showed me the ropes. It was great to learn from him."

Rob learned more about the presentation of maps in game products working at TSR. He particularly learned a great deal from talking with players and fans at conventions like the GEN CON Game Fair. " I always listen and want to hear what they have to say. If you don't listen to your public, you're not going to get anywhere. Some of the maps we did were very illustration-heavy, and some people didn't like them because they weren't as useful as ordinary maps. I learned that you have to balance looks and art with utility in a game product."

After working on numerous projects at TSR, Rob became Art Director of Cartography, overseeing the production of maps for all Wizards of the Coast role-playing game products. He is particu-

Lazzaretti Q&A

What's your alignment?
I'd say Neutral. I feel neutral about things most of the time.

***Star Trek* or *Star Wars*?**
Definitely *Star Wars*. It's less technical. *Star Trek* reminds me too much of working on *Traveller* for GDW. I like space opera.

Favorite 3rd Edition D&D character class?
I play rangers a lot. After reading *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn seemed like the coolest thing in the world to be.

Favorite video game?
Soul Calibur

What's the favorite map you've drawn?
The one I worked the hardest on: the poster map of Mechanus in *Planes of Conflict*. A whole world of gears, it was a lot of drawing.

Who's your favorite cartoon character?
Tetsuo from *Akira* or Kusinagi from *Ghost in the Shell*.

If you could invite any celebrity to your D&D game, who would it be?
Sam Kinnison, but he'd have to DM.

What's your dream project?
An interactive DARK•MATTER CD-ROM filled with different settings and graphics.

Favorite RPG product of all time?
The old *Fiend Folio*. The monsters are great, and the art is just incredible. It was just a creepy book.

Favorite gaming food?
Pizza is always the standby, really good Chicago pizza (which you can't really find in Seattle ... sigh).

Need to find your way through a D&D® dungeon? Let artist Rob Lazzaretti draw you a map.

larly proud of his work on the DARK•MATTER™ campaign setting for the ALTERNITY® game. "I had a blast doing the cartography," he says. "I read Wolfgang's initial text and starting doing conceptual stuff right away. It didn't even seem like work. I think DARK•MATTER will be one of the best things I've done for years to come." In Lazzaretti's opinion, the impressive graphics and presentation of the DARK•MATTER setting are definitely a sign of things to come for future games and products from Wizards of the Coast. "Everyone was in agreement to let us push the graphics as far as possible, and I think you will see more things going in that direction."

That includes the 3rd Edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, which presents a completely new challenge to the guy who still remembers playing the D&D® game in high school. "Even just being a small part of 3rd Edition is thrilling for me. It's like making history," Rob says. "I'm working with a lot of the other artists, and there's a lot of ideas and conceptual work going around. It's very exciting."

Currently, Rob is working on helping to create a cohesive look for the core books and dungeon maps. His tasks include drawing extensive diagrams and charts for the 3rd Edition rulebooks. "There are a lot of spell charts and diagrams of how spells like *fireball* work," he explains. There's also information on using miniatures in the game and designing dungeon maps. "The new 3rd Edition adventures are fairly map-intensive, and there's a ton of other stuff planned, including plans for a giant GREYHAWK® world map with a lot of detail."

Credits

Game Designers Workshop
Twilight 2000, 2nd edition
Traveller: the New Era
Dangerous Journeys
Dark Conspiracy
Challenge magazine
Journeys magazine

TSR/Wizards of the Coast
PLANESCAPE campaign setting
Planes of Chaos
Planes of Law
Planes of Conflict
BLOOD WARS Card Game
FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting
BIRTHRIGHT® campaign setting
RAVENLOFT® campaign setting
STAR*DRIVE® campaign setting
DARK•MATTER campaign setting.

For Rob, maps are an integral part of a roleplaying game product because they help tie everything together. Classic D&D adventures like *Tomb of Horrors* were based almost entirely around elaborate dungeon maps, and Lazzaretti wants to bring a similar feel to the new D&D adventures. "I have so many good memories of those first adventures," he says. "Sometimes, when adventures try to get too much into the background story, it detracts from the adventure itself." But he also acknowledges the importance of the plot. "You can have a lot of great artwork, but if the story is bad, it's all just eye candy."

One example of building adventures from maps is the "Maps of Mystery" feature from *DUNGEON Adventures*, which Rob recalls. "I always liked that idea of just creating something and letting people go with it. That's something we're trying to do here [in the Art Department]: creating a map of an area, giving it to the designers, and letting them go with it. It's interesting to send something out there and see what people do with it."

Rob hopes to make the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS books exciting, visual, and easy to use, while bringing back some of the same magic he felt when he first read the *Player's Handbook*. "I still have all my old AD&D books," he says, "and I read them from time to time and think about creating something like that. It's a dream come true. I have to pinch myself once in a while, because I can't believe how cool it is working in this industry."

MIND BLAST

Since their introduction in *The Drow of the Underdark*, spellsingers have become known for their magical powers. Scramble the letters in WONDROUS SPELLSONG and you can make the four-word name of some very common magical items. What are they?

You can find the solution to this MIND BLAST on page 14

Munchkins, Anyone?

By Gary Gygax

We all know the meaning of the term "munchkin" in regard to roleplaying games. It is a disparaging name used to describe young gamers who have high-level characters loaded with enough magical equipage to stock a small shop from floor to ceiling. The typical munchkin plays the game mainly to find more treasure, acquire yet more and more powerful magical goodies, attacking and slaying all met in the process. To manage this there must, of course, be munchkin Dungeon Masters to satisfy the desires of like players. Typically, such young DMs come in pairs, alternately playing and DMing, so that they too have PCs of incredible power. In this enclosed and self-sustaining environment, they flourish and wax strong.

Then along comes some curmudgeonly older gamer steeped in roleplaying lore, lofty in intellect. He and his cadre note the benighted state of the young gamers, who are having a marvelous time boasting freely of their mighty PCs, the weapons and accouterments of power they wield, describing how they slew this or that deity, and never attempting to act the part of the character of which each is so proud.

"Stupid munchkins!" sneers the chief of the sophisticates.

The associated jeer loudly enough for the munchkins to hear and be properly shamed. In due course, the targets of such contempt are affected. Some become "sophisticated" also, emulating their former persecutors. There is none so zealous as a convert. Perhaps this is satisfying to those who "converted" them, but I doubt it. It would seem more likely that those sneering at the "childishness" of munchkin gaming need such targets to feed their egos. Why?

This a good question, of course. After all, no matter what style one assumes in a roleplaying game, when all is said and done, it is a game. The players are essentially doing the same thing, engaging in make-believe. Because one game is more elaborate than another gives it no greater intrinsic worth. To some, however, the reward of playing isn't sufficient. They must force others to accept their version of entertainment. The act of disdaining "childish" make-believe validates their own style. That it needs validation speaks volumes.

"Stupid munchkins!" sneers the chief of the sophisticates.

Being in general more impressionable, the munchkins more often than not react to the attack by withdrawing from the game. What enjoyment is to be had from something labeled as childish, themselves petty and stupid? Even as the "sophisticates" thus thin the ranks by driving out new gamers, they also create more than a few verbal detractors of gaming in general. Such splendid work these "mature" fellows perform for us.

Worse still are the creative members of this haughty bunch of "sophisticates." They set about making roleplaying games that are ever more slanted toward their narrow concept of what the game form must be, complicating the material, speaking down to any who might disagree, and liberally proclaiming this creed. Unfortunately, otherwise sensible game authors tend to get caught in the snares of conceited notions set by this dogmatic little segment of game designers. So the more broadly accepting roleplaying games grow more and more narrow and confining, ape the mode of the "state of the art" offerings that are aimed at constraining, not encouraging, all forms of roleplaying.

That this is the case is evident in the lack of new players entering the ranks today. It struck me forcefully at the GEN CON® Game Fair. The proportion of attendees under twenty was alarmingly small, and there were few indeed of the 12–15 year-olds there. Seeing this "maturation" of the audience should trigger a warning to all. Without a steady influx of new, young participants, the game form is doomed.

Admittedly, I am not fond of munchkin gaming, and it is understandable to me that others likewise are not entertained by it. Never will I disparage the players, though! Suggest that there is greater enjoyment in other approaches to roleplaying? Yes, and set such examples as I can too, so as to guide the enthusiastic novices onto other paths that lead to more compelling vistas surely. Deride and look down upon them as inferiors? Never!

Untrained masters perhaps, these current unsophisticates, but they are part and parcel of the whole if roleplaying games are to prosper. All of us need the "munchkins" to insure that the future of the roleplaying game remains vital. So be kind, bite your tongue if need be, and remember when you first started playing.

In closing, note that "munchkin gaming" and "hack-and-slash" are not necessarily synonymous. This will be taken up next, in fact, so stay tuned, Perspicacious Reader.

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COUNTDOWN

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Rogues and the Skill System

When you created a 1st-level thief in the past, you knew what to expect: Pick Pockets, Find and Remove Traps, Move Silently, and so on. "Customizing" your thief meant choosing where to put your points, not choosing the abilities themselves. The new edition of the D&D® game changes all that, making rogues the most versatile of the 3rd Edition character classes.

Why Rogues Rock in 3rd Edition

- Sneak Attack better than Backstab
- The most skill points
- Widest skill selection
- Choose special abilities at 10th level
- No alignment restrictions
- More class skills than any other class
- Uncanny Dodge

The Rogue

The rogue takes the place of the thief from earlier editions. The name change reflects a subtle but significant change in the class: The rogue's unrivaled access to skills make it the most customizable class. More than ever before, each rogue character can enjoy a unique collection of talents.

Some of the classic thief abilities are now skills available to a number of classes. Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Open Locks, and Pick Pockets have all joined the skill roster. Naturally, rogues still can (and many probably will) choose them. The difference is that you don't have to devote your points to a skill you don't want for your character. Instead, you pick the ones that are right for your version of the rogue.

Sneak Attack Basics

The sneak attack ability is unique to rogues, and it's far more versatile and powerful than the 2nd Edition equivalent (the backstab) for three reasons:

1. **Any attack that would deny the target an AC bonus from Dexterity (even if the target doesn't normally get one) or any flanking attack can be a sneak attack.**
2. **Ranged attacks within 30 feet can count as sneak attacks.**
3. **With a sap or an unarmed strike, the rogue can deal subdual damage with a sneak attack.**

Class Abilities

Beyond the skill list, four class abilities define the rogue archetype. While two are very familiar, the others might make you ask, "Why didn't they think of that years ago?"

The **Sneak Attack** takes the place of backstab but adds extra dice of damage to an attack instead of multiplying the result of the regular damage roll. At first level, a rogue rolls an extra 1d6 damage on a successful Sneak Attack. Every two levels afterward, the rogue gains another d6 extra damage. Thus, a 7th-level rogue inflicts a punishing +4d6 damage on a sneak attack. Best of all, the Sneak Attack gives you more choices than in earlier editions. (See sidebar.)

Detecting traps now takes the form of advantages rogues enjoy when employing two skills: Search and Disable Device. Unlike other classes, rogues using the Search skill can locate mundane and magical traps, and they can use the Disable Device skill to neutralize them. Those who roll especially well can even bypass traps without triggering them.

The **Evasion** ability, gained at 2nd level, is a new addition that makes perfect sense for the nimblest of the D&D classes. Whenever making a Reflex saving throw for half damage, a rogue suffers no damage on a successful saving throw.

At 3rd level, rogues gain the **Uncanny Dodge** ability, a sort of danger sense that lets the character keep her AC bonus for Dexterity even when caught flat-footed or attacked by an invisible foe. At 6th and 11th levels respectively, the rogue cannot be flanked normally and gains a bonus to evade traps.

While some of these core abilities continue to improve with level, rogues can choose one from a menu of six extra-special abilities upon reaching 10th level and every three levels afterward. From low levels to high, playing a rogue is all about choices.

The Skill System

Rogues aren't the only class to benefit from the skill system—all characters gain skills—but rogues have access to more than 30 of the 40 skills in the *Player's Handbook*, and they are denied access to only one (Scry). Let's take a look at how skills work in general.

Buying Skills

At each level, characters get 2, 4, or 8 skill points. (Guess which class gets that 8!) Add your character's Intelligence bonus (and one bonus point for human characters), and at 1st level multiply this sum by 4. Thus, our halfling rogue, Filbert, with a +2 Intelligence bonus gains $(8 + 2) \times 4 = 40$ skill points at 1st level. At second level and each level after, Filbert gains another $8 + 2 = 10$ points.

After figuring how many points you have to spend, choose which skills to buy with them. The maximum number of skill points you can devote to a class skill is equal to the character's level +3; the maximum for a cross-class skill (one that isn't directly related to your class) is half that, and you gain the benefit of only half as many skill points as you devote to the skill. Thus, Filbert can devote 4 points to the Search skill (a class skill) for 4 "ranks" in that skill; devoting 4 skill points to Spellcraft (a cross-class skill) yields only 2 ranks, and that's the most he can place in Spellcraft at 1st level.

Opposed Skill Checks

Many skill checks are really contests between two skills working against each other. Slipping undetected behind an opponent requires a Move Silently skill check, but the would-be victim makes an opposing Listen skill check to counter the maneuver. Likewise, Bluff and Sense Motive, Use Rope and Escape Artist, and Pick Pockets and Spot are all excellent examples of skills used in opposition.

Using Skills

Once you've bought your character's skills, using them is a snap. Whenever you must make a skill check, simply roll 1d20 and add the skill modifier. That modifier is composed of the skill rank, any ability modifier, and any miscellaneous modifiers.

For example, say Filbert wants to make a Hide check to avoid a hobgoblin patrol. Add his skill rank (4) to the Search skill's key ability (Filbert's 17 Dexterity, for +3), and a bonus for being a small character (+4). When Filbert sinks down into the shrubberies, you roll 1d20 + 11 to determine whether he remains concealed.

Difficulty Class & Opposed Checks

Did Filbert hide from the hobgoblins? That depends on the Difficulty Class (DC) of the task. DCs are normally numbers or the results of other skill checks. If Filbert was searching a room, the DC would be a number, perhaps a 15 for a nominally difficult search.

Since Filbert is hiding from other beings, however, his roll is compared to the Spot skill result of the hobgoblins. If Filbert rolls higher, he stays hidden. If the hobgoblins roll higher, they don't have to make other plans for dinner.

Details

This overview just scratches the surface of the new D&D skill system. In addition to these basics, skill rolls can be modified by favorable or unfavorable circumstances, cooperative efforts, and skill synergy (having two or more skills that work well together). Also, characters can usually attempt an untrained skill check. If the DC isn't too high, there's even a reasonable chance of success in many cases.

Unlike the proficiencies and secondary skills of earlier editions of the game, skills are an integral part of the new D&D game. Whether you play a rogue or another class, you might very well find yourself making skill checks far more often than attack rolls.

Taking 10 and Taking 20

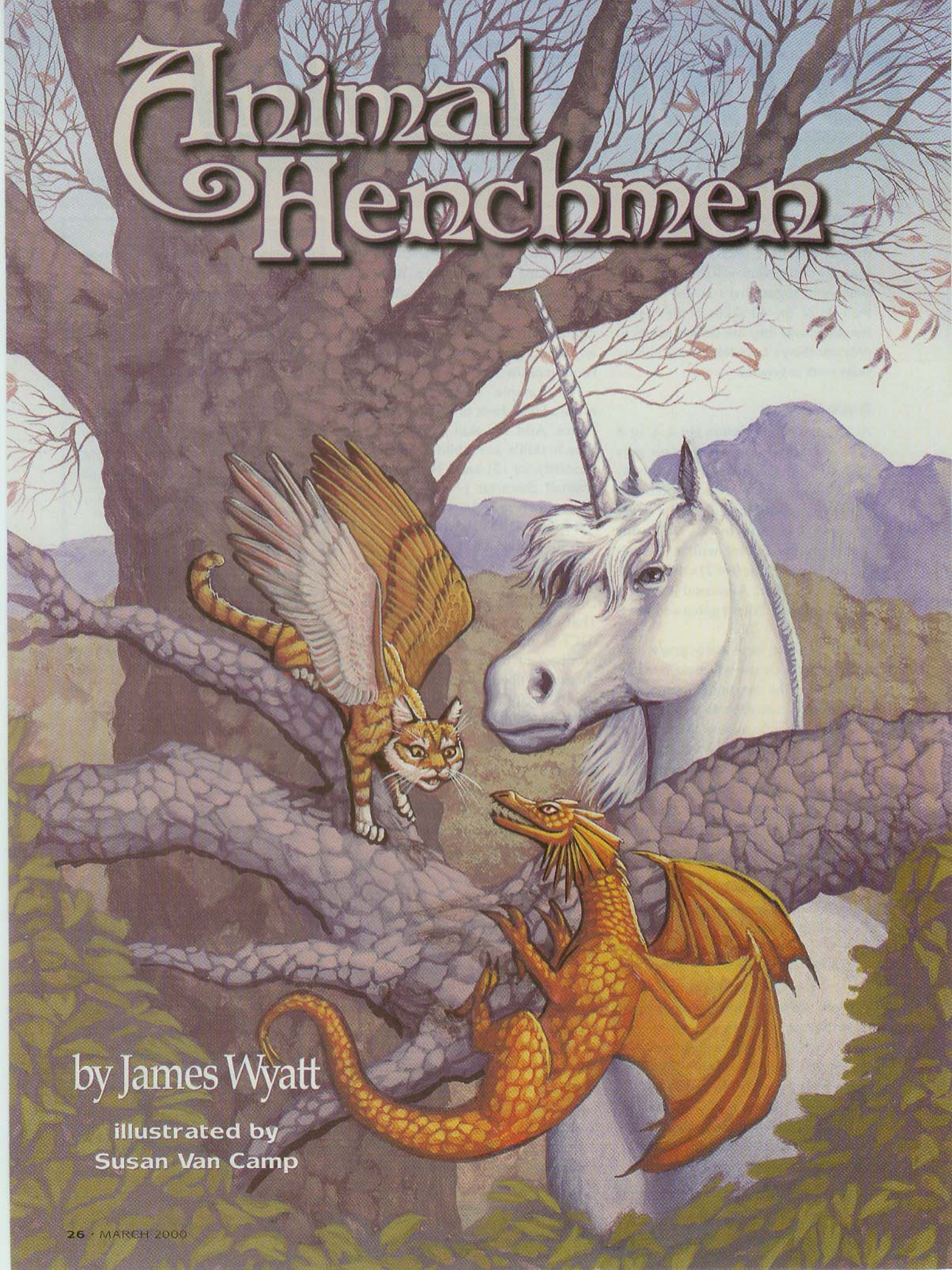
Sometimes you need just a little concentration to do the job right. If your character isn't under stress or otherwise distracted, she can "take 10" on a skill check, adding her skill modifier to 10 without making a roll. If the result meets or exceeds the Difficulty Class, the skill check succeeds.

Other tasks are easier if you can just put enough time into them. If you really want to spend the extra time searching a dungeon room (20 times longer than normal), you can "take 20," adding your character's skill modifier to 20 for the final result.

Note that a roll of "1" is not an automatic failure, and a roll of "20" is not an automatic success.

Join us next month when we take a look at that most classic of character classes—the fighter, master of one of the 3rd Edition game's most exciting innovations: the feat.

Animal Henchmen



by James Wyatt

illustrated by
Susan Van Camp

The animal companion is a common element of many AD&D® games. What if the animal in question is a dolphin or a blink dog, with intelligence at least equal to the average human? A fantasy world allows for animals like these to serve as important characters. While normal animals can be compared to hirelings or servants, intelligent animals can play a role similar to that of henchmen—as friends and allies of the PCs. Like henchmen, these animals cannot be bought or even hired (for they do not value money, for the most part); their companionship must be earned through faithfulness and trust.

Here are descriptions of a variety of animals with at least Average intelligence: asperii, talking birds, giant lynxes, winged cats and tressym, blink dogs, dolphins, pseudodragons, giant eagles, hippocampi, moon-horses, giant and talking owls, pegasi, unicorns, and mist wolves. Each entry includes roleplaying notes and suggestions as to how a member of each species might become attracted to a PC as an animal henchman. A second section describes a simple system of advancement for these henchmen, letting them gain experience and abilities as their PC companion does.

Intelligent Animals

The following pages describe each animal race. The information given for each species appears in the following format:

The basic statistics for each race appear in abbreviated format.

Basic information about the animal species appears next. This includes physical, mental, and social attributes.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Guidelines for roleplaying a henchman of the animal race. This includes the circumstances that might lead an animal of this kind to become a henchman of a PC.

Special Abilities. Unique characteristics possessed by this animal race. This might include proficiencies that henchmen of this race possess automatically.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. NWPs that members of this animal species can learn as they gain experience. At the DM's discretion, an animal henchman might already possess one or more of these proficiencies when joining a PC. NWPs for animal henchmen are described more fully at the end of this article.

Asperii

AC 4; MV 21, Fly 42 (C); HD 4; THAC0 17; # AT 3; Dmg 1–8/1–8/1–4; SD immune to cold and wind; SZ L (8'); ML elite (13–14); Int high to exceptional (13–16); AL NG; *MCA4*.

Also known as wind steeds, asperii are horse-like creatures with a natural ability to *levitate*. They appear as white, gray, or dun-colored horses with short manes of silver, white, or light gray. Long tufts of hair extend from their fetlocks, shoulders, and chins as well. They ride the winds with ease, flying so smoothly that their riders can even cast spells from their backs.

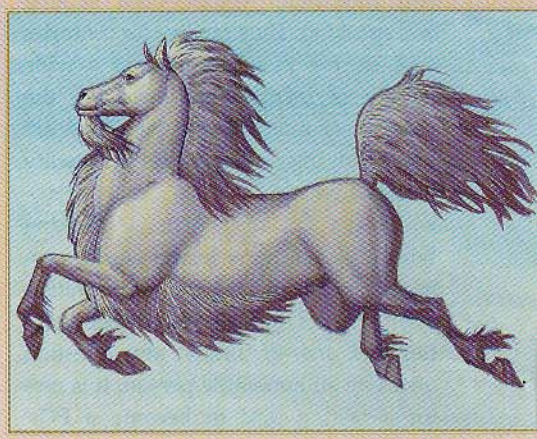
Asperii are highly intelligent and accept only riders of similar alignment. They loathe griffons and hippogriffs and generally attack them on sight.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Asperii are independent and free-spirited. They detest servitude and quickly waste away if confined. They are also strongly good-aligned, however, and readily join a good cause. When they have worked with an individual on several occasions and come to trust that person, they can become fiercely loyal companions. Only riders of Neutral, Lawful Neutral, or Neutral Good alignment are acceptable to an asperii.

If an asperii is ever mistreated by its rider, and especially if the rider attempts to restrain or confine the asperii (which the steed considers proof of a lack of trust), the asperii leaves forever.

Special Abilities. Asperii possess a limited form of telepathy that they use to communicate with each other. This telepathy also allows them to communicate with other intelligent races, but its range is limited to 60 yards.

Asperii have the gift of *true seeing* and can see into the Ethereal and Astral planes. They are immune to gaze attacks and winds of any type. They can ride on the wind, increasing their movement rate by one for every mile per hour of wind over 20 mph. They can also bestow a *feather fall* ability on themselves or anyone they can touch, up to 4 times per day.



Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Appraising, Artistic Ability, Blind-fighting, Crowd Working, Dancing, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Etiquette, Fishing, Gaming, Heraldry, Herbalism, Jumping, Local History, Observation, Orienteering, Religion, Spellcraft, Survival, Swimming, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Bird, Talking

AC 6; MV 6, Fly 18 (C); HD 5; THAC0 15; # AT 1; Dmg 1–8; MR 50%; SZ S (2' tall, 4' wingspan); ML unsteady (5–7); Int genius (17–18); AL N; *MCA1*.

Racial abilities from the gnomish ability to speak with burrowing animals to Athasian half-elves' gift for befriending animals, class abilities like rangers' followers and wizards' familiars, character kits such as riders and animal masters, and spells such as *animal friendship* all create or allow a special relationship between a player character and an animal. Such relationships have been detailed extensively in other sources, such as *The Complete Ranger's Handbook* and, most recently, Clayton R. Beal's article in *DRAGON® Magazine* #237, "Man's Best Friend."

Talking birds are intelligent avians that resemble a cross between a parrot and a toucan. They have bright plumage and melodious voices—both singing and speaking. They can live for centuries and, during that time, gather a wide variety of information, including the mastery of many languages. They are known for their wisdom and the quality of their advice.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Talking birds seek harmony in the world, promoting peace in nearby communities. They respect honor above all other qualities and answer almost any question asked by an honorable person. It is rare for a talking bird to become a PCs' henchman. They are usually asked by a divine power to serve an especially worthy character as a teacher and advisor.

Because of their vast knowledge and experience, talking birds tend to view themselves as equal if not superior to the characters they accompany. They answer questions when asked and freely offer advice—sometimes too freely!—but do not tolerate being treated as servants or hirelings.

Special Abilities. Talking birds automatically have the Local History proficiency for a specific region. Many gain the proficiency in a number of regions.

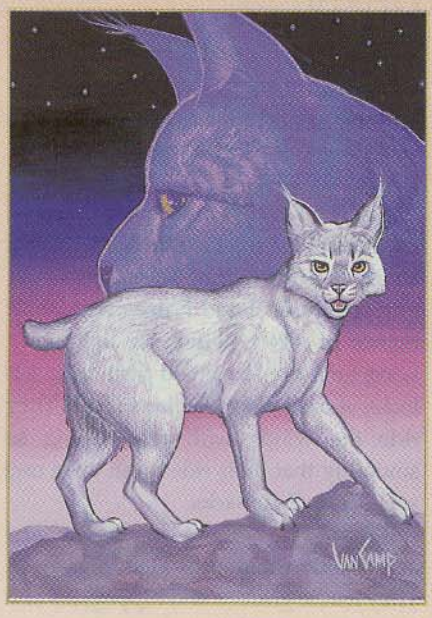
Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Ancient History, Ancient Languages, Animal Lore, Appraising, Astrology, Astronomy, Cryptography, Engineering, Etiquette, Heraldry, Herbalism, Local History, Modern Languages, Navigation, Observation, Reading Lips, Reading, Religion, Singing, Spellcraft, Ventriloquism, Weather Sense.

Cat, Great: Giant Lynx

AC 6; MV 12; HD 2+2; THAC0 19; # AT 3; Dmg 1–2/1–2/1–2; SA rear claws 1–3 each, leap up to 15'; SD camouflage; SZ M (4½' long); ML average (8–10); Int very (11–12); AL N; *MM*/36.

Native to cold subarctic forests, the giant lynx is gifted not only with greater size than its normal cousin but also with significantly higher intelligence. They are smaller than most of the other great cats and are easily identified by the tufts of hair on their ears and cheeks. Their large paws let them cross deep snow without sinking in.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Giant lynxes often serve as guards and companions to wood elf bands and most often enter a henchman relationship with wood elves.



Giant lynxes are wilderness hunters, and some of their habits are disturbing to more civilized characters. They move with complete silence, even across snow, and pounce on anything they consider prey—or, in playfulness, on their companions. True friends of a giant lynx are often greeted with surprise gifts on awaking in the morning: dead rabbits, game birds, or even small deer. Like many intelligent animals, giant lynxes are independent and willful. They often disappear for days at a time and return acting as if nothing unusual had happened. Humanoid companions who take offense at this behavior are likely to be thought jealous and possessive by their free-spirited lynx companion.

Special Abilities. Giant lynxes can detect traps with a 75% chance of success. They can hide in natural surroundings 90% of the time and inflict a –6 penalty to their prey's surprise rolls.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Animal Lore, Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Fishing, Hunting, Jumping, Local History, Modern Languages (giant lynxes can learn to understand humanoid languages but cannot speak them), Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Running, Survival, Tightrope Walking, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Cat, Winged, Greater

AC 6; MV 12, Fl 30 (B, C mounted); HD 5+5; THAC0 15; # AT 3; Dmg 1–4/1–4/1–10; SA rear claws 2–7 each; SD –2 bonus to surprise rolls; SZ L (6–7' long); ML average (8–10); Int average (8–10); AL CN; *MCA1*.

Greater winged cats are large felines, similar in size and appearance to a cougar or panther except for their large, fur-covered wings. Their fur ranges from sandy gray to yellow to black, and they sometimes have dark stripes. They have yellow, green, or blue eyes.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Winged cats are strongly independent and accept only the companionship of individuals whom they consider loyal friends. Like elves, they are slow to offer their friendship but slower still to retract it. Few humanoid companions can find patience to deal with a winged cat's erratic behavior, fierce independence, and vengeful tendencies, but the reward is a lifetime

companion. Like giant lynxes, winged cats are natural hunters and often bring gifts of prey to their companions.

Special Abilities. None.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Animal Lore, Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Fishing, Hunting, Jumping, Local History, Modern Languages (winged cats can learn to understand humanoid languages but cannot speak them), Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Running, Survival, Tightrope Walking, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Cat, Winged, Tressym

AC 6; MV 6, Fly 18 (A); HD 2; THAC0 19; # AT 3; Dmg 1–2/1–2/1–4; SD immune to poison; MR 40%; SZ T (2' long, 3' wingspan); ML elite (13–14); Int very (11–12); AL CN; *MCA1*.

Tressym are small winged cats similar in appearance to domestic cats. Their wings are batlike but covered in feathers.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Tressym are flighty and mischievous, wilder and even more independent than domestic cats. They are playful and most consider them cute, but they are also capricious, self-important, and willful. Still, they can form strong attachments to human or demihuman companions, and they have even been known to sacrifice their lives for a friend.

Special Abilities. Tressym are immune to poison and can *detect poison*. They have infravision to 120 feet and can detect invisible creatures within 90 feet.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Fishing, Hunting, Jumping, Modern Languages (tressym can learn to understand humanoid languages but cannot speak them), Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Running, Survival, Tightrope Walking, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Dog, Blink

AC 5; MV 12; HD 4; THAC0 17; # AT 1; Dmg 1–6; SA attack from the rear 75% of the time; SD teleportation; SZ M (4' long); ML steady (11–12); Int average (8–10); AL LG; *MM*/57.

Blink dogs are stocky, muscular wild dogs with yellowish brown fur and intelligence on a par with the average human. Blink dogs gain their name from their unique ability to *teleport*. Blink dog packs use this ability to confuse their prey, popping in and out of battle and striking from behind much of the time.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Blink dogs are noble and kind, believing in law and order and holding high ideals of justice and good. Their alignment sometimes draws them to paladins or other lawful good heroes. Blink dog puppies are also considered a valuable trade item in some markets, and blink dogs raised from pups are likely to become lifelong companions to their "masters." However, even a good-aligned character who purchases a blink dog puppy must remember the general rule that loyalty and companionship cannot be bought; they must be earned. A character who mistreats a blink dog quickly finds it gone—and a blink dog is notoriously difficult to confine if it wants to leave.

Special Abilities. Blink dogs have the unusual ability of teleportation. It is limited compared to the *teleport* spell, but more powerful than *blink*. Blink dogs have loose control over the location to which they teleport ("close enough to bite that orc") and instinctively manage not to teleport into another object or creature, but are unable to teleport to precise locations or anywhere outside their range of vision. When blink dog packs are overmatched, they move out of danger by teleporting to their maximum range, then do it again until they escape the threat.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Etiquette, Heraldry, Hiding, Hunting, Jumping, Local History, Modern Languages (blink dogs can learn to understand humanoid languages but cannot speak them), Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Running, Survival, Swimming, Tracking, Ventriloquism, Weather Sense.

Dolphin

AC 5; MV Swim 30; HD 2+2; THAC0 19; # AT 1; Dmg 2–8; SD save as 4th-level fighter; SZ M (5'–6' long); ML steady (11); Int very (11–12); AL LG; *MM*/59.

Dolphins and porpoises are aquatic mammals closely related to whales, though they rarely grow longer than 6 feet or so. They are highly intelligent and benevolent toward good-aligned sea-dwelling and seafaring races. Dolphins have a large dorsal fin and two flippers at their sides. They can be easily distinguished from sharks, however, by their horizontal tail flukes. Most dolphins also have narrow, rounded snouts.

Dolphins are social creatures, living in schools of up to a few hundred.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Dolphins cannot survive alone, and more than one exceptional dolphin has joined a party of aquatic or seafaring adventurers after their school was destroyed by sharks or sahuagin—the adventurers becoming, in effect, the new school. Dolphin characters are always very attached to the group they travel with and never abandon that group, even to save their own lives. Unlike other henchmen, dolphins

tend to identify with an entire group rather than a single individual.

Dolphins are fun-loving and generally carefree. They enjoy swimming at high speed, leaping out of the water, racing boats, and playing with objects in the water. Their non-dolphin companions sometimes find this behavior exasperating, but it is mostly amusing and almost always harmless.

Special Abilities. While swimming, dolphins make high-pitched clicking sounds that function as a form of sonar similar to that used by bats. As a result, they are considered to possess Blind-fighting as a bonus proficiency. Naturally, they also possess the Swimming and Deep Diving (if using the *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills & Powers* rules) proficiencies.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Animal Lore, Crowd Working, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Gaming, Hiding, Juggling, Local History, Modern Languages (dolphins can learn to understand humanoid languages but cannot speak them), Navigation, Observation, Religion, Survival.

Special Note: According to *Monster Mythology*, dolphins can become priests of the goddess Trishina. At the DM's option, a dolphin henchman could be a priest, as described in that book.

Dragonet, Pseudodragon

AC 2; MV 6, Fly 24 (B); HD 2; THAC0 19; # AT 1; Dmg 1–3 + special; SA poison sting; SD camouflage; MR 35%; SZ T (1½' long); ML champion (15); Int average (8–10); AL N(G); *MM*/91.

Pseudodragons are small, magical, flying lizards native to wilderness forests but occasionally found as companions to humans, particularly wizards. They look much like tiny red dragons, except for the long, barbed tail and slightly brownish coloration. Their coloration is subject to frequent change, however, as they can alter their color to blend in to their forest homes. They are omnivorous, eating rodents and birds along with leaves and fruits. They are solitary and hibernate through the winter.

Roleplaying Suggestions. The personality of pseudodragons has often been labeled "catlike." They are proud and self-absorbed almost to the point of sheer arrogance, demanding inordinate amounts of attention and affection from those they choose as their companions. They resent and quickly correct any perception that they are pets and do not tolerate being insulted or mistreated.

Pseudodragons have been known to come in response to a wizard's *find familiar* spell (under very unusual circumstances) but normally choose their own humanoid companions. No one is quite sure why pseudodragons sometimes seek out such relationships, though some speculate that it is because humanoids tend to be so impressed with a pseudodragon's powers that they're willing to make idiots of themselves fawning over the creature to win and keep its companionship.

Pseudodragons worship the deity Nathair Sgiathach, described in *Monster Mythology*.

Special Abilities. Pseudodragons have 35% magic resistance and share this magic resistance with anyone in physical contact with them. They have 60' infravision and can see invisible objects. Their chameleonlike skin allows them to blend into forest surroundings, making them 80% undetectable. Pseudodragons communicate via telepathy and can transmit what they hear and see to their companions within 240 yards.

The tail stinger of a pseudodragon is poisonous, causing victims who fail their saving throws to lapse into a cataleptic state for 1–6 days. At the end of that period, there is a 25% chance the victim dies.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Animal Lore, Appraising, Artistic Ability, Crowd Working, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Gaming, Herbalism, Hunting, Juggling, Local History, Observation, Reading Lips, Spellcraft, Survival, Weather Sense.

Eagle, Giant

AC 7; MV 3, Fly 48 (D); HD 4; THAC0 15; # AT 3; Dmg 1–6/1–6/2–12; SA dive; SZ L (10' tall, 20' wingspan); ML elite (13); Int average (8–10); AL N; *MM*/27 (more complete information in MC1).

Giant eagles are enormous birds of prey similar in many ways to rocs, but with much greater intelligence to make up for their smaller size. They look very much like normal eagles, with a full range of coloration. Their eyesight is legendary, as are their courage and elegant beauty.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Giant eagles are sometimes found as guards and companions for elves or dwarves, and are most likely to become henchmen to members of those races. Great elven and dwarven heroes have been known to befriend individual giant eagles or even entire eyries, exchanging occasional favors or forming lifelong bonds.

Giant eagles are noble and proud. They expect to be treated with respect, even a touch of reverence, and have little patience with wise-cracking, arrogant adventurers. In their own eyes, their companionship is too valuable to squander on fools and would-be heroes; only proven heroes of the best sort deserve the companionship of a giant eagle.

Giant eagles worship the god Remnis, described in *Monster Mythology*.

Special Abilities. Giant eagles often attack by diving from a great height. If

attacking from more than 50 feet in the air, a giant eagle can add +4 to its attack roll and double its normal claw damage. Thanks to their tremendous eyesight, giant eagles can be surprised only at night or in their lairs, and even then they gain a +2 bonus to their rolls. They are considered to possess the Alertness proficiency automatically.

Giant eagles communicate through a limited telepathy that allows them to "speak" mentally with any intelligent creature.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Ancient History, Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Etiquette, Heraldry, Local History, Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Survival, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Hippocampus

AC 5; MV Swim 24; HD 4; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1–4; SZ H (18' long); ML steady (11–12); Int average (8–10); AL CG; *MM*/189.

Hippocampi are marine creatures with the foreparts of a horse and a long, fishlike tail. They are colored in the hues of the ocean: ivory, greens, and blues. Hippocampi are greatly prized as aquatic mounts, thanks to their speed and intelligence.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Hippocampi are very similar in personality and temperament to horses, in all their variety. Some are wild and spirited, others docile and friendly.

Hippocampi often form partnerships with tritons, merfolk, and sea elves, exchanging their valuable services as mounts for protection and care. It is a relatively easy matter for an aquatic character of one of these races to win the companionship of a hippocampus, as these creatures are fairly numerous and accustomed to serving as mounts. Some hippocampi, particularly young ones, actively seek out more adventuresome companions, hoping to see more of the world.

Hippocampi can breathe fresh or saltwater with equal ease, and they can even breathe air for a short time if they can get regular gulps of water. They cannot move on land, however.

Special Abilities. Hippocampi are considered to have the Swimming and Deep Diving proficiencies automatically.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Animal Lore, Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Heraldry, Hiding, Local History, Modern Languages (hippocampi can learn to understand humanoid language but cannot speak them), Navigation, Observation, Religion, Spellcraft, Survival.

Horse, Moon

AC 7; MV 18; HD 4; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1–8/1–8; SA spells; SD immunity to undead powers; SZ L; ML champion (15); Int average to very (9–12); AL CG; *MCA2*/70.

Moon-horses are magical equines native to elven lands. They appear as large, elegant horses with coats of white to silver, and black, gray, or white manes. They have been faithful allies and companions to the elven people far longer than recorded history, and legends of ancient elven heroes often speak of the moon-horse steeds they rode.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Young moon-horse stallions have been known to seek out the companionship of an elven hero. They are particularly prized by elven undead slayers and others devoted to exterminating the walking dead.

Moon-horses are similar to normal horses in their temperament, but they are less skittish. Their moods are reflected in their deep eyes.

Special Abilities. Moon-horses are immune to the special attacks of undead creatures, though they suffer full normal damage from both spells and physical attacks that originate from undead. Each moon-horse can also cast a single magical spell, once per day: *color spray, magic missile, shield, sleep, wall of fog, knock, ray of enfeeblement, stinking cloud, summon swarm,* or *web.*

Moon-horses can understand the elven language, though they cannot speak it. They are considered to have the Modern Languages (Elven) proficiency automatically.

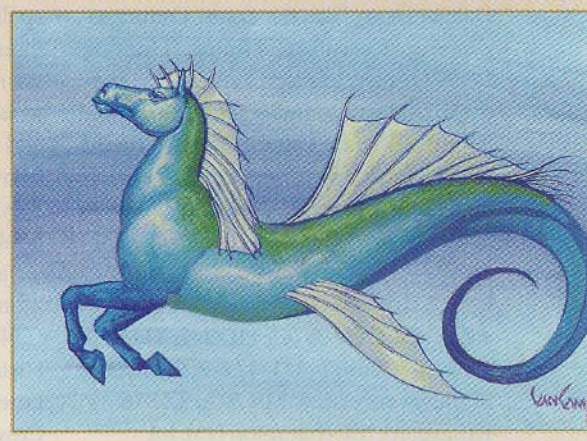
Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Ancient History, Ancient Languages, Animal Lore, Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Etiquette, Heraldry, Jumping, Local History, Modern Languages (moon-horses can learn to understand humanoid languages but cannot speak them), Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Running, Spellcraft, Survival, Swimming, Tracking, Weather Sense.

At the DM's option, moon-horses can spend two proficiency slots (or 5 character points) to learn a second spell from the above list. A moon-horse that knows two spells can still cast each spell only once per day.

Owl, Giant

AC6; MV 3, Fly 18 (E); HD 4; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 2–8/2–8/2–5; SA surprise; SZ M (20' wingspan); ML steady (11–12); Int very (11–12); AL N; *MM*/27 (more complete information in *MC1*).

Giant owls are large nocturnal birds of prey, similar in some ways to giant eagles. Their heads are rounded, their beaks smaller than an eagle's, and their wings adapted to silent flight.



Their eyes see very well in all but the deepest darkness. They live in wilderness areas, where they hunt large fowl and rodents.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Giant owls often serve as companions and mounts to wood elves, and they are most likely to become henchmen to wood elf PCs. Their view of the world squares quite well with that of the wood elves: They are suspicious and slow to trust outsiders, but they love the natural world with all its beauty. They are withdrawn and quiet, revealing little of their thoughts even to close companions, while their loyalty is hard to win and easy to lose.

Giant owls do not function well during the daytime and resent being asked to wake up and move around after a night of active hunting. They do not remain long with humanoid companions who are unable to adjust to their nocturnal schedules.

Special Abilities. Giant owls fly in complete silence, imposing a –6 penalty to their victims' surprise rolls.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Animal Lore, Astrology, Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Gaming, Herbalism, Hiding, Hunting, Local History, Modern Languages (giant owls can learn to understand humanoid languages but cannot speak them), Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Spellcraft, Survival, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Owl, Talking

AC 3; MV 1, Fly 36 (C); HD 2+2; THAC0 19; # AT 3; Dmg 1–4/1–4/1–2; SA swoop; SD never surprised; MR 20%; SZ S (6' wingspan); ML champion (15); Int exceptional (15–16); AL LG; *MM*/27 (more complete information in *MC1*).

Talking owls are magical owls about the size of a large great horned owl. Like talking birds, talking owls are sometimes sent by divine powers to aid great heroes in important quests. They assist only characters of good alignment, and only if the heroes' mission is vital to the struggle against evil. It is extremely rare for a talking owl to enter into a long-term relationship with a PC, acting as a henchman: only lawful good characters whose entire lives are devoted to an epic struggle against evil find such loyalty in a talking owl. Under ordinary circumstances, a talking owl will accompany a hero for only 1–3 weeks.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Despite their high Intelligence and phenomenal (21) Wisdom scores, talking owls are humble and soft-spoken. They are devoted to the cause of good, usually to a specific good religion, and they strive to live in every way in accordance with their beliefs. Unlike talking birds, they do not consider themselves superior to the heroes they aid in their quests—they have nothing but respect for those who risk life and limb to combat evil in the world.

Talking owls are kind and beneficent. They often seem grandfatherly in their attitude toward humanoids: Their affection is obvious, their wisdom is unquestionable, and their advice is plentiful.

Special Abilities. Talking owls can *detect good* at will and have spell immunities appropriate to their high Wisdom scores. They are never surprised and have 25% magic resistance. They attack with their beaks and talons as normal owls; if they dive from a height of 50 feet or more to attack, they gain a +2 attack bonus and inflict double damage with their claws.

Talking owls ordinarily speak Common and 1–6 other languages.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Ancient History, Ancient Languages, Animal Lore, Astrology, Astronomy, Cooking, Crowd-working, Cryptography, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Engineering, Etiquette, Gaming, Heraldry, Herbalism, Hiding, Hunting, Local History, Modern Languages, Navigation, Observation, Reading Lips, Reading/Writing, Religion, Seamanship, Singing, Spellcraft, Survival, Tracking, Ventriloquism, Weather Sense.

Pegasus

AC 6; MV 24, Fl 48 (C, D mounted); HD 4; THAC0 17; # AT 3; Dmg 1–8/1–8/1–3; SA dive, rear kick; SZ L (5½' at shoulder); ML steady (11); Int average (8–10); AL CG; *MM*/285.

Pegasi are the large, white, winged horses of legend. (Brown and black pegasi also exist.) They are strongly aligned with the cause of good and never join a neutral or evil character.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Pegasi are wild and do not generally like to be ridden. A character of good alignment who surprises a pegasus and puts a bridle on it might be able to tame it (as described in the *Monstrous Manual*™ book), but the creature will never accept a saddle. Once accustomed to being ridden, and familiar with their riders, pegasi are fiercely loyal, remaining lifelong companions.

Though intelligent, pegasi have no innate means of communicating with humanoids; they can't speak humanoid languages and are not blessed with any form of telepathy. Though they often learn to understand human speech, they rarely offer any communication of their own.

Special Abilities. Pegasi can *detect evil* and *detect good* at will, with a range of 60 yards. They fight with their hooves and a vicious bite. When diving from heights of 50 feet or more, pegasi can use their hoof attacks with a +2 attack bonus and inflict double damage.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Ancient History, Ancient Languages,

Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Heraldry, Local History, Modern Languages (pegasi can learn to understand humanoid languages but they cannot speak them), Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Spellcraft, Survival, Weather Sense.

Unicorn

AC 2; MV 24; HD 4+4; THAC0 15; # AT 3; Dmg 1–6/1–6/1–12; SA charge, surprise; SD immune to *charm*, *hold*, and death spells, save as 11th-level wizard, immune to poison; SZ L; ML elite (14); Int average (8–10); AL CG; *MM*/353.

Unicorns are horse-like creatures found in sylvan woodlands, often in the company of faerie creatures such as dryads or sprites. They are creatures of purest good but are ferocious when defending their forest homes and battling evil. They appear as white horses with cloven hooves, flowing manes and fetlocks, and a spiraling, ivory-colored horn.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Unicorns are notoriously difficult to win as companions. They refuse to work with anyone who is not of good alignment, and they avoid anyone whose alignment is open to question. Traditionally, they only approach female virgins; they sometimes serve as mounts for elite female elven warriors. They may also work with dryads, pixies, sprites, or other faerie creatures.

Unicorns are proud and wild. While they might become loyal companions if treated well, they can never be tamed and do not accept a settled life.

Special Abilities. Unicorns have a natural ability to sense the presence of an enemy within 240 yards. They move with complete silence, imposing a –6 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls. Their horns are treated as +2 magical weapons.

Unicorns can *teleport* up to 360 yards once per day. They can take only a single rider with them. Unicorns are completely immune to *charm* and *hold* spells, as well as death magic, and they make saving throws vs. spell as 11th-level wizards. They are also immune to poison.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Ancient History, Ancient Languages, Animal Lore, Artistic Ability,

Blind-fighting, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Herbalism, Hiding, Jumping, Local History, Modern Languages, Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Running, Spellcraft, Survival, Swimming, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Wolf, Mist

AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+3; THAC0 17; # AT 1; Dmg 2–8; SD breath weapon; MR 10%; SZ M (4' at the shoulder); ML elite (13–14); Int average (8–10); AL LG; *MC5*.

Mist wolves are large magical wolves with gray fur (tipped with white). They are fierce opponents of evil, despite an undeserved reputation stemming from humanity's almost instinctual fear of wolves. They are similar in most ways to normal wolves, but their greater intelligence makes them more effective combatants against evil.

Roleplaying Suggestions. Mist wolves are good to the core, but misunderstood and unappreciated. This might make them bitter and resentful, but they find strength in the company of other mist wolves. They cannot survive without companionship, and many mist wolves, their packs destroyed, have latched on to rangers, elves, or others who battle evil in the wilderness. They sleep curled up with their adopted pack members and fight in close coordination with them.

Special Abilities. The name "mist wolf" derives from the creatures' ability to breathe a cloud of thick mist, twice per day. Similar to a *wall of fog* spell, this mist fills a 10' × 10' × 10' cube for 5 rounds, obscuring all vision and often allowing a hasty retreat. Mist wolves also have an innate ability to *detect evil*.

Nonweapon Proficiencies. Alertness, Animal Lore, Blind-fighting, Danger sense, Direction Sense, Endurance, Etiquette, Heraldry, Herbalism, Hiding, Hunting, Jumping, Local History, Modern Languages (mist wolves can learn to understand humanoid languages but

Table 1: Nonweapon Proficiencies for Animal Henchmen

Alertness†	Ancient History
Ancient Languages	Animal Lore
Appraising	Artistic Ability
Astrology	Astronomy*
Blind-fighting	Cooking
Crowd Working†	Cryptography*
Dancing	Danger Sense†
Deep Diving*	Direction Sense
Endurance	Engineering
Etiquette	Fire-building
Fishing	Gaming
Heraldry	Herbalism
Hiding†	Hunting
Juggling	Jumping
Local History	Mod. Languages
Navigation	Observation†
Orienteering*	Reading Lips
Reading/Writing	Religion
Running	Singing
Seamanship	Spellcraft
Survival	Swimming
Tightrope Walking	Tracking
Ventriloquism	Weather Sense

* These proficiencies are described in *Player's Option: Skills & Powers*.

† These proficiencies are described in *The Complete Book of Humanoids*.

Table 2: Animal Henchman Ability Scores

Animal's Size	Strength	Dexterity	Constitution
Tiny	2d8	2d6 + 13	2d6 + 3
Small	4d4	2d6 + 11	2d6 + 5
Medium	3d6	2d6 + 9	2d6 + 7
Large	2d4 + 13 (allow %)	2d6 + 7	2d6 + 9
Huge	2d4 + 15 (allow %)	2d6 + 5	2d6 + 11
Gargantuan	2d4 + 17 (allow %)	2d6 + 3	2d6 + 13
Animal's Intelligence	**Intelligence**	**Wisdom**	**Charisma**
Average	2d4 + 4	2d3 + 6	2d3 + 6
Very	2d4 + 6	2d3 + 8	2d3 + 8
High	2d4 + 8	2d3 + 10	2d3 + 10
Exceptional	2d4 + 10	2d3 + 12	2d3 + 12
Genius	2d4 + 12	2d3 + 14	2d3 + 14
Supra-Genius	2d4 + 14	2d3 + 16	2d3 + 16
Godlike	2d4 + 16	2d3 + 18	2d3 + 18

cannot speak them), Observation, Reading Lips, Religion, Running, Spellcraft, Survival, Tracking, Weather Sense.

Animal Proficiencies and Advancement

One of the best ways to make animal henchmen unique and valuable NPCs in their own right is by giving them access to nonweapon proficiencies. This helps define the scope of an animal's abilities (just how much does Jira the talking bird know about recent events in the province of Kelzar?) and can add an interesting twist to what might start to seem like a commonplace animal. (Piraeus the asperii happens to be an expert gambler—he even uses his mouth to roll dice, though he needs a trusted friend to hold his cards.) Naturally, not all NWPs available to player characters are appropriate for animals, and certain animal races will be more likely to learn certain skills. **Table 1** summarizes the NWPs available to animal henchmen, while the species descriptions above list proficiencies available to each race.

To determine an animal henchman's proficiency scores, you need to generate ability scores for the creature. The guidelines presented in the *DM Option®: High-Level Campaigns* book (Tables 6–11) work well to generate scores for nonhumanoid creatures like the animals described in this article. If you do not have access to that book, a simplified version of those rules is outlined in **Table 2.**

As intelligent creatures, the animals described in this article are capable of learning from experience, developing new skills, and improving existing ones. A simple method for tracking animal henchman experience is to award the animal henchman one new proficiency slot for every three levels its PC "master" advances. (If you are using the Player's Option rules, award the animal one character point for each PC level.) This allows animal henchmen to improve their skills, while remaining fairly ordinary specimens in terms of combat abilities and the like.

It is also possible to allow animal henchmen to have a character class and advance in levels just as ordinary henchmen do (gaining experience points at half the rate of PCs), but detailed rules for creating these henchmen as full-fledged NPCs are beyond the scope of this article.

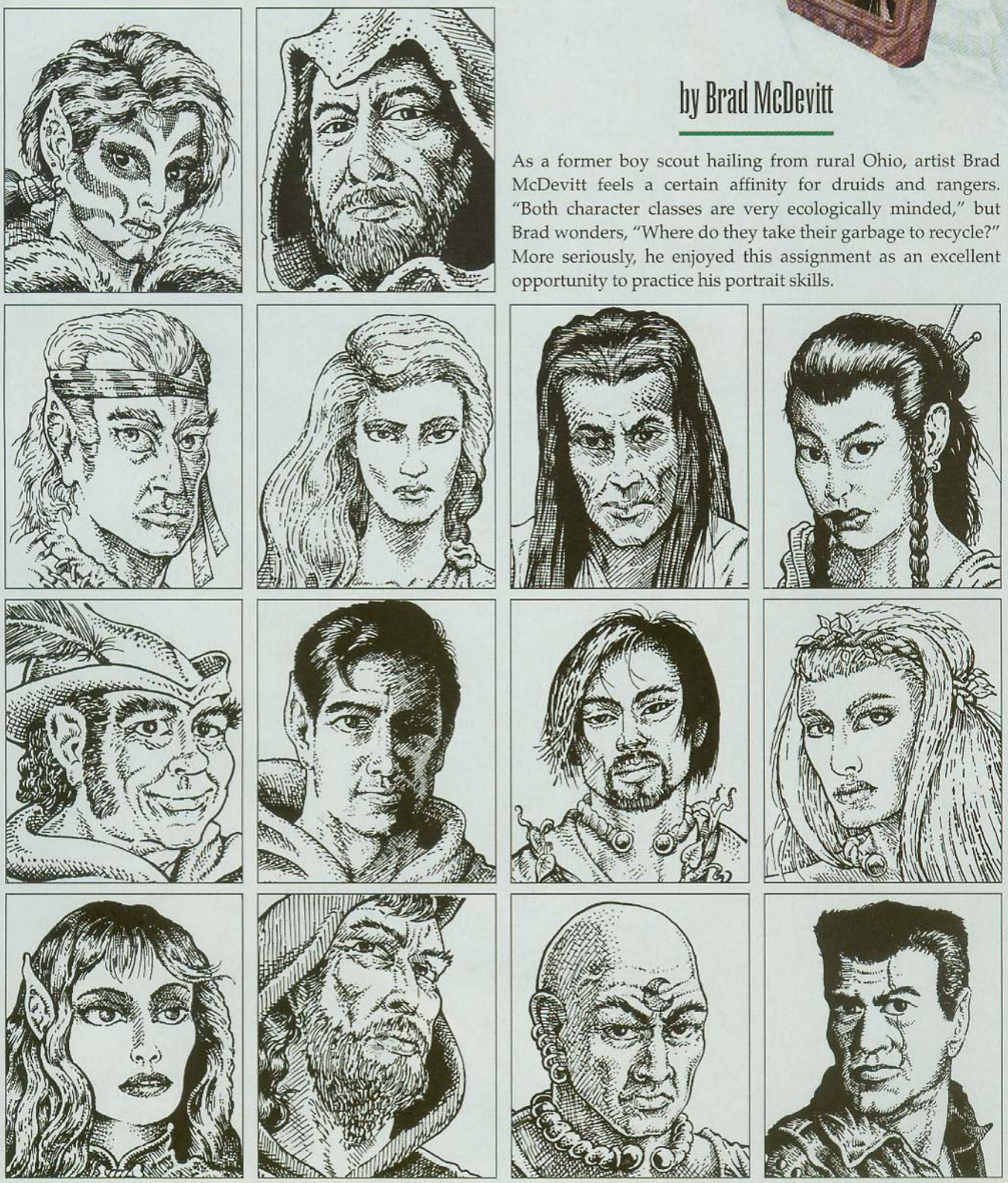
James has recently joined Wizards of the Coast as a game designer. He once had a dog who was smarter than he.

PC Portraits

Druids & Rangers

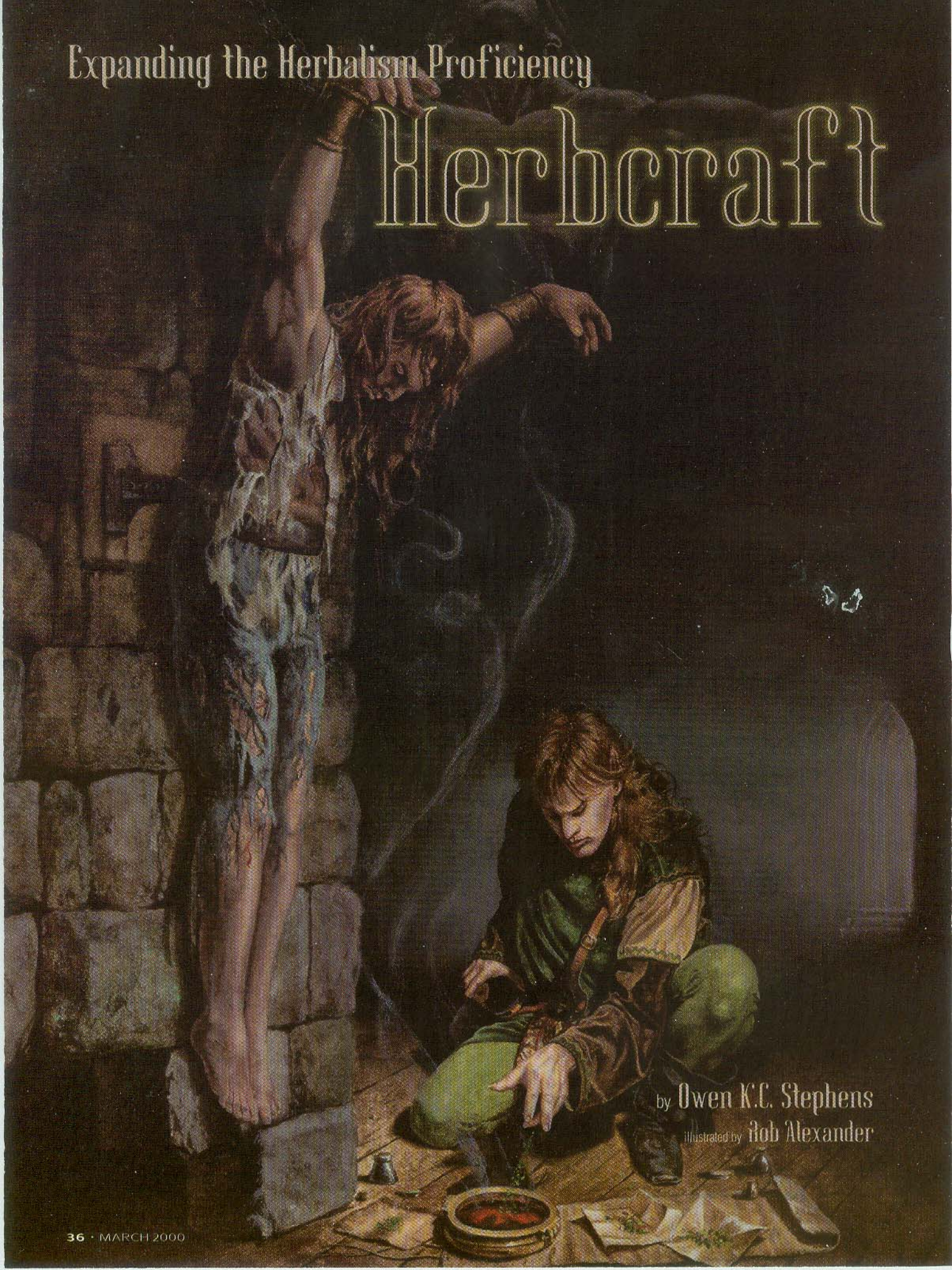
by Brad McDevitt

As a former boy scout hailing from rural Ohio, artist Brad McDevitt feels a certain affinity for druids and rangers. "Both character classes are very ecologically minded," but Brad wonders, "Where do they take their garbage to recycle?" More seriously, he enjoyed this assignment as an excellent opportunity to practice his portrait skills.



Expanding the Herbalism Proficiency

Herbcraft



by Owen K.C. Stephens

illustrated by Bob Alexander

Herbs and herbalists are a staple of fantasy literature. Strider saves a life with Athelas in **The Lord of the Rings,** *and Raistlin uses herbal tea to calm his cough in the* DRAGONLANCE® *novels. Herbcraft is an important element in those stories and helps set the fantastic tone of those worlds.*

How does a DM handle herbcraft in an AD&D® campaign? The *Player's Handbook* gives guidelines covering only four possible uses for the Herbalism proficiency—restoring 1 hit point, aiding in the control of disease, brewing natural poisons, and granting a bonus to saving throws against ingested or injected poison. The nonweapon proficiency rules in PLAYER'S OPTION®: *Skills & Powers* add only a little information, explaining how many herbs a proficient character can find in a day and how many doses it takes to brew poison.

One remedy to this lack of information is to create long lists of every possible mundane and magical herb, where they can be found, what they can do, and how to prepare them. But this task requires a lot of work from the DM and a great deal of bookkeeping for players. Hours of gameplay could be spent dealing with an herbalist's quest to refill a depleted store. While this sort of interaction could be the basis for a game in itself, it's distracting during most sessions and is likely to leave other players bored. For most herb uses, the game effect is not worth so much real-world effort.

A simpler alternative is to expand on the herb pool idea presented in *Skills & Powers*. Rather than specify exactly how much of each herb a character has, the player simply tracks how many doses of herbs the character has available. Each use of the Herbalism nonweapon proficiency consumes one or more doses of "general" herbs.

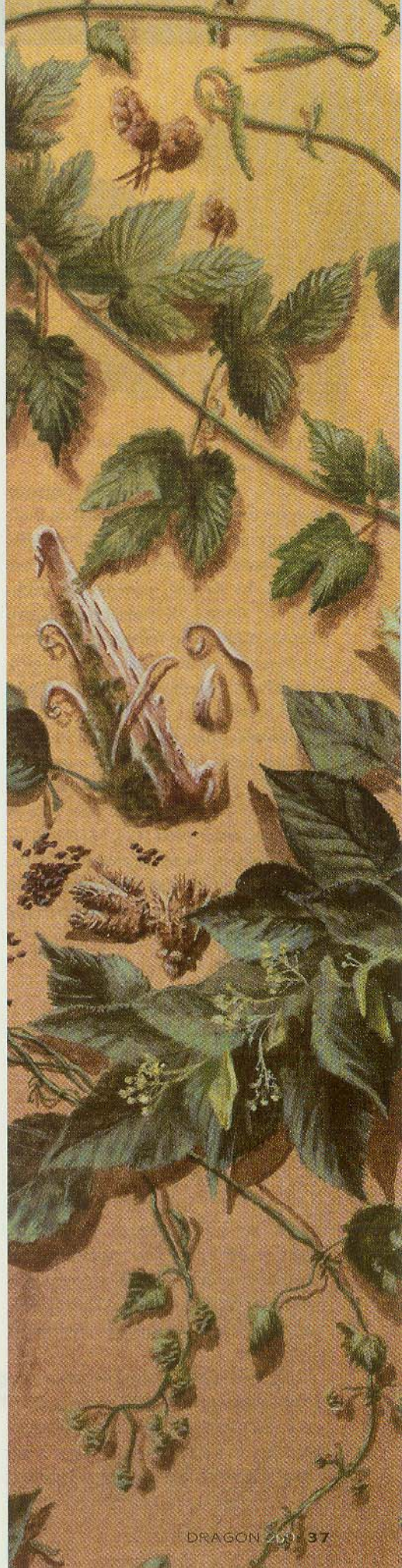
A list of possible mundane herb effects and how they work follows. This system expands the possible uses for herbalism without too much work for the DM. It is compatible with either the *Player's Handbook* or *Skills & Powers* rules. Simply replace the Herbalism description with the rules below.

Herbalism

Those with knowledge of Herbalism can identify plants and fungi and prepare nonmagical herbal cures (called simply "herbals"). An herbalist can make *potions* (liquids designed to be imbibed), *poultices* (soft masses of boiled herbs applied directly to wounds and rashes), *powders* (dry medications to be either ingested or applied externally), *balms* (waxy pastes applied externally), *salves* (thin ointments used on wounds), *plasters* (thick, mudlike pastes), and *infusions* (steeped or brewed teas) for medical and pseudo-medical purposes.

An herbalist can acquire herbs either by buying a number of preserved herbs or by foraging for them. Apothecaries in most major towns and cities can sell preserved herbs for 10 gp per dose. If the herbalist spends a full 8-hour day searching a familiar terrain for herbs, a successful proficiency check allows him or her to find enough fungi, roots, leaves, pollen, and pulp for 1d6 doses. An herbalist in unfamiliar terrain suffers a –2 penalty to the proficiency check, and a success indicates finding only 1d4 doses.

The effects that can be created with herbs are broken into ranks. Rank 1 represents the most minor herbal remedies, while rank 3 represents the upper limit of mundane herbal curatives. A character with the Herbalism proficiency who attempts to create an herbal effect uses a number of doses equal to the herbal's rank. Thus, a character making an herbal to cure a Rank 1 headache uses one dose in the process, whereas a character attempting to brew a Type G poison uses two doses. As long as the herbalist has enough doses of herbs, he or she can attempt any of the basic effects. Unless



otherwise specified, it takes 6 rounds to create an herbal remedy.

Herbs do not retain their potency indefinitely. Most raw herbs lose their potency after 2–3 days. An herbalist can extend the herbs' potency to 1–4 months by drying, powdering, pickling, or otherwise preserving them. However, this also reduces their effectiveness, so an herbalist loses 10–40% (rounding up) of the doses of any herbs preserved.

Example: Chloe the mage has 14 doses of fresh herbs and decides to preserve them. She loses (1d4 × 10%) of her herb doses. As it happens, Chloe loses 30% of her doses, leaving her with 10 (14 x 0.7 = 9.8, rounded up) doses of preserved herbs.

Herbalism does not allow an accurate diagnosis of diseases or poisons. That requires the Healing proficiency.

Rank 1 Effects

1. Alleviate one minor symptom.
2. Aid a Healing check.
3. Increase a patient's natural healing rate.
4. Weaken a poison.

1. Alleviate one minor symptom. Minor symptoms include any effect of disease, poison, or infirmity that is irritating but not severe enough to impose a negative modifier. This includes such symptoms as mild coughs, runny noses, indigestion, sore throats, mild headaches, muscle cramps, toothaches, and most allergies.

If the herbalist has the Healing proficiency or is working with another character who does, no proficiency check is necessary to relieve the condition. If the character doesn't have access to Healing, a successful Herbalism check is required to relieve the patient's discomfort. Infusions, powders, and balms are the most common herbals for relieving minor symptoms. One full application of an herbal suppresses one minor symptom for 1d4+6 hours.

2. Aid a Healing check. An herbalist can augment any attempt to use the Healing proficiency by making a potion, salve, or plaster for the healer to use on a patient. This grants a +2 bonus to a Healing proficiency check. If the same character has both the Healing and Herbalism proficiencies, no Herbalism check is required to give this bonus. If two separate characters are working together, a successful Herbalism check is required for the bonus to be granted.

3. Increase a patient's natural healing rate. An herbalist can increase a wounded character's natural healing rate by 1 hp per day by treating wounds with salves, plasters, and poultices. One dose of herbs is used for each day of recovery. If the herbalist has the Healing proficiency or is working with another character who does, no proficiency check is necessary to increase the healing rate. If the character doesn't have access to Healing, a successful Herbalism check is required each day to determine whether the herb recipient recovers an additional hit point.

4. Weaken a poison. A character with the Herbalism proficiency can attempt to aid an individual poisoned by ingested, injected, or contact poisons. Ingested poisons must be treated with an herbal potion, while contact and injected poisons can instead be treated with plasters and poultices. If the poisoned character can be tended to immediately (the round after the character is poisoned) and the care continues for the next 5 rounds, the victim gains a +2 bonus to his or her saving throw. (Delay the saving throw until the last round of tending.)

No proficiency check is required if the character has both Healing and Herbalism or knows the exact poison used. If only Herbalism is available and the exact poison is unknown, the character must make a successful Herbalism check at a –4 penalty to aid the poisoned patient.

Rank 2 Effects

1. Alleviate a serious symptom.
2. Cure a minor disease.
3. Alleviate a mild emotional state.
4. Brew a mild natural poison.

1. Alleviate a serious symptom. Serious symptoms include any effect of disease, poison, or infirmity that is severe enough to impose a negative modifier or minor disability . This includes such symptoms as severe coughs, laryngitis, dizziness, migraine headaches, arthritis, and major cramps. It requires two doses of herbs in the form of a potion, infusion, salve, or balm to suppress one serious symptom. Such herbals are effective for 2d4 hours.

Because of the greater complexity of herbals able to alleviate serious symptoms, a successful Herbalism check is always required. If the herbalist has the Healing proficiency or is working with another character who does, there is no penalty to this proficiency check. If the character doesn't have access to the Healing proficiency, a successful herbalism check at a –2 penalty is required for the herbal to relieve the patient's discomfort.

There is some risk involved when using these more powerful herbal remedies. If the herbalist rolls a natural 20 on his or her Herbalism check, he or she has misjudged the size of the dose of herbs. The patient must then make a saving throw vs. poison. If the saving throw is successful, the patient falls asleep for 2d6 hours and suffers no further detrimental effects. But if the saving throw fails, the patient grows weak and must make a System Shock roll or fall into a coma. A patient in a coma is allowed a System Shock roll at –25% each week to determine whether he or she recovers.

2. Cure a minor disease. Minor diseases include most flu-like diseases, colds, rashes, and minor infections. Treatment of such diseases requires two doses of herbs per day. Salves, infusions, and potions are most commonly used to treat minor diseases. The herbalist must spend at least an hour each day monitoring the patient. A successful proficiency check at a –2 penalty means the herbal cures the minor disease in 1–4 days. Even a failed check normally reduces the

disease to its mildest form and shortest duration. However a natural 20 on the Herbalism check indicates the patient has had an allergic reaction to the herbal and must make a saving throw vs. poison. If the saving throw is successful, the patient simply gains no benefit from the herbal treatment. If the saving throw fails, the disease lasts twice as long as it would have without treatment and has a 25% chance of becoming a serious disease (see below).

3. Alleviate a mild emotional state. Minor emotional states include any mundane emotional disturbances that are not severe enough to impose negative modifiers. This includes such conditions as stage fright, nervousness, unease, melancholy, and minor phobias. It does not include any emotional condition resulting from magic of any kind. A successful Herbalism check at –2 allows the herbalist to create an infusion or powder that successfully calms such emotions for 5d6 rounds.

4. Brew a mild natural poison. It takes 3d4 hours for a character with herbalism to brew a natural poison from roots and fungi, and a successful proficiency check is always required. Such poisons must be used within 2d4 days, or else they lose their potency. Most natural poisons are ingested, but an herbalist can attempt to create an injected poison by taking a –4 penalty to the check, or a contact poison can be brewed by taking a –6 penalty to the Herbalism check. Although it is up to a DM to determine the exact types of poisons available, most poisons of this type should be Type A or G. (See page 73 of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide.*)

Rank 3 Effects

1. Alleviate critical symptoms.
2. Cure a serious disease.
3. Alleviate a serious emotional effect.
4. Brew a theriac.

1. Alleviate critical symptoms. Critical symptoms include any effect of disease, poison, or infirmity that threatens the patient's life. This includes such symptoms as coughing up blood, phlegm-coated lungs, high fevers, and brain swelling. It requires three doses of herbs to suppress one serious symptom for 1d6 + 6 hours.

If the herbalist has the Healing proficiency or is working with another character who does, no proficiency check is necessary to successfully relieve the condition. If the character doesn't have access to Healing, a successful Herbalism check at a –4 penalty is required to relieve the patient's discomfort.

There are serious risks involved when using these powerful herbal remedies. If the herbalist rolls a natural 19 or 20 on the Herbalism check, she has misjudged the size of the dose of herbs. The patient must then make a saving throw vs. poison at a –2 penalty. If the saving throw is successful, the patient falls asleep for 2d6 hours and suffers no further detrimental effects. If the saving throw fails, the patient grows weak and must make a System Shock roll or fall into a deep coma. A patient in a deep coma is allowed a System Shock roll at –50% each week to determine whether he recovers.

2. Cure a serious disease. Serious diseases include most life-threatening illnesses such as pneumonia, small pox, and gangrene. Curing such ailments requires the use of three doses of herbs per day. The herbalist must spend at least 2 hours each day monitoring the patient. A successful proficiency check at a –2 penalty cures a serious disease in 1–4 days. Even a failed check normally reduces the disease to its mildest form and shortest duration. In the case of a truly serious disease, however, this could still result in death.

When attempting to treat a serious disease, an herbalist must use powerful and dangerous herbs. This always runs the risk of attempting a cure worse than the disease. A natural roll of 20 on the Herbalism check indicates the patient has had a negative reaction to the herbal, and he must make a saving throw vs. poison at a –2 penalty. If the saving throw is successful, the patient simply gains no benefit from the herbal treatment, and the disease runs a longer course, perhaps lasting for months. If the saving throw fails, the disease becomes critical, requiring that the patient make a successful saving throw vs. death magic to survive.

3. Alleviate a serious emotional effect. Serious emotional states include any mundane emotional disturbances that are severe enough to impose negative game modifiers. This includes such conditions as panic attacks, hysteria, suicidal depression, and major phobias. It does not include any magically induced or created emotions. A successful herbalism check at a –4 penalty allows the herbalist to brew an herbal that successfully calms such emotions for 5d6 rounds.

4. Brew a theriac. A theriac is a potion designed to be taken before being poisoned. It is most often used when a character has a strong reason to suspect she will be poisoned in the near future (such as when invited to dinner by an old enemy). A theriac takes 1–4 hours to brew and requires a successful herbalism check at a –2 penalty. Once drunk, it grants its imbiber a +2 bonus to all saving throws vs. poison for 2–8 hours.

Magical Herbs

Fantasy literature is full of magical herbs with power far beyond those of mundane medicines. Herbs with the ability to raise the dead, grant improved sight or hearing, or make the imbiber immune to some nefarious effect are common in stories but difficult to simulate with these simplified herb rules.

A DM who decides to add such herbs must do a little more bookkeeping. The easiest way to handle them is to give each herb an effect that duplicates an existing wizard or priest spell. The herbalist player must keep track of how many doses of the magical herb are in his possession and whether they are fresh or preserved. An attempt to find or use a magical herb of this type requires a proficiency check with a –1 penalty per level of the spell effect duplicated.

Example: A DM has decided that he wants his game to include an herb that can be brewed into an infusion that grants *strength* (as the 2nd-level wizard spell). He names the herb "red willow" and determines that only the gnomish healers in one particular kingdom know of it. When a PC herbalist later spends time studying with those gnomes, the DM tells the player about the magical herb and how it works. The PC can now find and brew herbals from red willow by making a proficiency check at a –2 penalty.

In most cases, herbs should not duplicate the effects of spells higher than 2nd level, and they should never duplicate a spell greater than 5th level. Magical herbs of this type are usually carefully guarded secrets, and PCs should gain access to such knowledge less often than they acquire new spells and spellbooks. Below are a few examples of "common" magical herbs for AD&D campaigns.

Giantweed

This common weed grows in swamps and marshes and is difficult to distinguish from various kinds of tall grasses that are often found nearby. Most herbalists don't realize giantweed is different from its neighboring grass, but a few societies of apothecaries teach their members about this unusual herb. An herbalist so trained can make an Herbalism check at a –1 penalty to locate 1d6 doses of giantweed after spending 8 hours searching an appropriate area.

A properly trained herbalist can turn giantweed into a salve that *enlarges* one creature (as per an *enlarge* spell cast at the herbalist's level). This requires an Herbalism check at a –1 penalty to successfully apply.

Green Lotus

This fragrant and beautiful emerald-colored flower is considered by most herbalists to be no more than a mild diuretic. However, some monastic orders keep a secret record of the powers of the green lotus. These records show how a fresh blossom from this flower can be used to create an herbal infusion that sends the imbiber into a prophetic trance. An herbalist trained to locate a fresh green lotus blossom can find 1d6 doses if she makes a successful Herbalism check at a –2 penalty after an 8-hour search.

Creating the infusion requires 1d10+5 rounds and an Herbalism check at a –2 penalty. Anyone drinking the infusion falls into a trance for 2 rounds. During this time, the character can divine whether an action taken within the next half-hour will be beneficial or harmful, as per the *augury* spell.

Hemerill

Hemerill is a rare fernlike plant found in forests and woodland areas, often hidden among similar looking plants. Only herbalists who have been carefully trained to search for hemerill have any chance of finding it, and even they must make an Herbalism check at a –2 penalty to do so. A successful 8-hour day spent searching turns up enough hemerill for 1d6 doses.

The leaves of this herb have a strong power to weaken toxins and cleanse poisoned wounds. An herbal can be made from hemerill by soaking the leaves in wine until they become a pasty salve. To do this successfully takes 3d6 rounds and requires an herbalism proficiency check at a –2 penalty. Such an herbal works as the *slow poison* priest spell. It is often used by sylvan creatures and druids, who use it as a temporary antidote until a healer can be reached.

Jessidek

This uncommon vine is usually found growing in stony areas, such as old ruins or near cave openings. It is a deep purple color and has small clusters of heart-shaped leaves. Although most herbalists know nothing of jessidek, a few schools of wizardry have books detailing the magical properties of this vine and might teach this knowledge to their students. Only characters who have been taught about jessidek realize the plant has any mystic value. Even with this knowledge an herbalist must make an Herbalism check at a –1 penalty to find as many as 1d6 doses of jessidek after an 8-hour search of likely ruins.

The sap of the jessidek vine has a magical property to make a creature who imbibes the correct amount of it more attractive and commanding. Using too much or not enough of the sap, however, has no effect. An Herbalism check at a –1 penalty is required to correctly gauge the exact amount of sap an individual needs. With a successful roll, the sap affects a character in the same way as a *friends* spell.

Lightning Seeds

Despite their name, these very rare herbs are actually small fungi that grow on dead trees in rural and wooded regions. The fungi are small silver pods no more than ¼" long. The lightning seeds are tasteless, harmless, and—by most accounts—useless. Finding the small pods is very difficult. An all-day search and a successful Herbalism proficiency check at a –3 penalty is required to find just 1d6 of them.

According to bardic rumors and legends, it is possible, though difficult, to use lightning seeds to concoct an herbal powder capable of granting the user great speed, although this is said to take a terrible toll on the user's body.

If this lost lore could be found, it would allow an herbalist to make one dose of this powder after several hours of work and an Herbalism check at a –3 penalty. Anyone who then used the powder would be affected as by a *haste* spell cast at 5th level (lasting 8 rounds). But there is a price for such power; the user ages 1 year as detailed in the *haste* spell description.

Although Owen has always been fascinated by plants and herbs, and even has a sister named Fern, his black thumb has so far succeeded in killing any vegetation left at his mercy. Condolences may be sent to him at OStephens@aol.com.

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Extra Healing

Alternative Healing and Subproficiencies

"I bind his wounds and cast cure light wounds on him...."

How often are these the first words uttered immediately after combat, reducing the selfless act of healing the wounded to a banal act akin to drawing a weapon? Wouldn't the wonder and awe of epic fantasy be better served with this response:

"I apply a poultice of Ginseng leaves and St. John's Wort to the wound, squeeze the juice from an orange into his mouth, and pray that my god share my health with him...."

by William James Cuffe

illustrated by Greg Staples

It's difficult for Americans to imagine any type of medicine other than traditional Western medicine. To us, it's natural that the physician focuses on his patient's chief complaint for diagnosis, giving treatments that are appropriate for the illness associated with the primary symptoms. If there's a flaw to modern medicine, it's that occasionally the symptoms are treated while the illness goes undiagnosed.

In alternative medicines, the practitioner regards the chief complaint as merely one expression of an imbalance in the patient's health. Further, alternative approaches operate from the belief that the human body naturally has the ability to heal itself. Eating well, living harmoniously with the surroundings, and maintaining a positive outlook will prevent the individual from falling prey to sickness and harm. By maintaining this "balanced state," the human body will not become ill in the first place. Where conventional healing is reactive, alternative healing is proactive. These different views of how the body works present a wealth of opportunities to play an otherwise hum-drum healer as an exotic mystic with mysterious ways from a distant land.

Ayurveda

Developed in India five millennia ago, Ayurveda is a complex form of natural medicine. Ayurveda, meaning knowledge (ayur) of life (veda), uses the principle of three metabolic body types or doshas. An individual's constitution is the sum of the dosha types of Kapha, Pitta, and Vata.

Treatment is designed based on the patient's constitutional make up and its imbalances in doshas to re-establish harmony. Treatments include diet, yoga exercises, massage, herbal tonics, and medicated inhalations.

Chakra

Lumped together with Crystal and New Age healing, this method of "medicine" is based on the belief that all crystals vibrate at a pitch that's harmonious with various parts of the body, and these wavelengths can be used to restore the patient to health. Practice of chakra healing is as simple as placing particular gemstones around the patient's home, carrying them in a pocket, wearing them around the neck or as some other type of jewelry, and touching them as the urge arises. It's based on the belief of many ancient cultures such as the Greeks, Egyptians, and Babylonians that crystals housed spirits, devas, fiends, or fairies.

Energy

This system of healing utilizes the life force that not only flows through the patient but around him or her as well. Practitioners diagnose illness by assessing the disruption of a person's life force or energy field. Faith healing, prayer, and spiritual ritual are examples of this practice, as is the psionic discipline of Psychometabolism. (See *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.) In addition to Psychometabolism, the following psionic powers prove useful to an energy healer:

Sciences	Devotions
Clairsentience	*poison sense*
Metapsionics	*psychic surgery, cannibalize, intensify, psionic residue*, psionic vampirism**, psychic drain, stasis field*
Telepathy	*acceptance*, empathy, suppress fear***

* These psionic powers are found in *Dragon Kings*.

** These psionic powers are listed in *The Will and The Way*.

New Proficiencies

To become proficient in any of these alternate methods of medicine requires the character to know either the Healing (2 slots, Wisdom –2) or Herbalism (2 slots, Intelligence –2) nonweapon proficiencies. (See the *Player's Handbook* for more information.) Because they depend on the Healing and Herbalism proficiencies, these methods are considered "sub-proficiencies." Instead of simply applying a proficiency slot to improve the Healing or Herbalism skill, the character takes one of the following subproficiencies. This way, not only has the character learned a different way of diagnosing malady but also gains the usual bonus for dedicating an additional slot to her existing Healing or Herbalism proficiency (+1 bonus per additional slot).

At the DM's discretion, it might be necessary to learn an additional language to fully comprehend a different style of healing (an Asian language for Oriental Herbalism, or Dwarven for Chakran Healing, for example). The DM might decide that a character with a background matching that of a healing philosophy receives a +1 bonus to the skill. (A healer with an Indian background, for instance, might learn Ayurvedic medicine at Intelligence –1 instead of the normal –2, or a psionicist specialist in Psychometabolism might learn Energy healing at Wisdom –3.)

Chakra
Wisdom –2 1 Slot
Priest
Characters proficient with Chakra healing can locate and use the appropriate gems and crystals to restore a patient's health. Characters with the Mining proficiency gain a +1 bonus when attempting to locate and gather crystals.

Energy
Wisdom –4 1 Slot
Priest, Psionicist
This ability allows the character to use her own life force to augment or heal a patient. The character can give up 2 of her own hit points to grant one hit point to the patient. An additional +1 bonus is applied to an Energy healing roll if the character also has the Contact proficiency, which allows the healer to transfer PSPs instead of hit points at a rated of 5 PSPs per 1 hit point. (This requires a successful MTHAC0 roll against the subject's MAC.)

Western
Wisdom –3 1 Slot
Priest
This proficiency allows the character to perform battlefield surgery such as amputation, extracting arrowheads, or removing flesh-burrowing creatures like rot grubs. The character gains a +1 bonus to this proficiency check if he or she also has the Anatomy proficiency.

Herbalism Sub-Proficiencies

Ayurveda
Intelligence –2 1 Slot
Priest, Wizard
Ayurvedic herbalism aids in the diagnosis and cure of biological infestations. Lice, tapeworms, and other parasitic organisms can be identified with a successful Ayurvedic proficiency check, which garners a +1 bonus if the healer also knows the Astrology proficiency.

Homeopathy
Intelligence –5 1 Slot
Priest, Wizard
Homeopathic herbalism is a "last ditch" method of healing. When all else fails and no cure can be found (such as with poisons or diseases like mummy rot), a practitioner of Homeopathy can make a proficiency check and try reintroducing the malady in an attempt at eradicating it. While a success means further damage halts, a failure means the subject is reinfected at one-quarter the virulence of the original malaise, and both "illnesses" must be eradicated before the patient can be healed.

Naturopathy
Intelligence –4 1 Slot
Priest, Wizard
On a failed Herbalism roll, a healer can attempt Naturopathy to address the illness with common plants and foods. Success cures the illness, but healing takes twice as long as normal; failure means that healing takes three times as long once the illness is cured. A Naturopathy roll gains a +1 bonus if the character also successfully employs the Foraging proficiency.

Oriental
Intelligence –3 1 Slot
Priest, Warrior, Wizard
Those proficient in Oriental herbalism can decrease the recovery time needed for reduced statistics in half. Sapped Strength from the touch of the undead, befuddled Intelligence, and strained Constitutions are examples of ills that the application of Oriental healing can help restore. Those familiar with some type of martial art gain a +1 bonus to their Oriental proficiency check, as both stem from the same ideology.

Homeopathy

Homeopathy is based on the principle that the functions of the body and spirit are centered in the concept of vital force, or "life forces." Disruption of the vital force by either internal or external events causes an illness or disease called a *similimun*. A person's vital force then reacts to the disrupting similimun by altering the normal body functions.

Treatment to resolve this conflict have the same similimun as the patient's condition. This concept is the basis of homeopathy: "Like cures like." A serious case of illness is cured by the introduction of a small, diluted sample of the same disease. This method of "fighting fire with fire" dates back to ancient Greece.

Naturopathy

Naturopathic medicine closely resembles the practices of conventional western medicine, but healers of this form of medicine treat patients only with pure, natural methods, disdaining any pharmaceutical or surgical procedure. It's touted as the "medicine of the poor" due to its low cost and ease of procurement. Unlike Ayurvedic or Oriental methods, Naturopathy does not rely on abstract concepts like body types or vital life force, but on the conventional anatomy we know today. It employs botanical treatments, the fundamental basis of contemporary medicine.

Oriental

Chinese or Oriental medicine encompasses many differing techniques such as acupuncture, cupping, moxibustion, and *qigong*. Acupuncture is the application of thin needles to the various pressure points of the body. Cupping is the use of a small, heated glass or bamboo cup to induce vacuum and applying it to the epidermis in order to stimulate local circulation. Moxibustion is the placement of a smoldering plug of dried and powdered herbs either on or in close proximity to the body. Qigong is deep breathing and movement exercise, most famous for its part in martial arts styles like Tai Chi Chuan.

Western

This is the medieval equivalent to modern medicine. Amputation, invasive surgery, and alchemical drugs are common. Alchemical drugs are medicines created by artificial means of combining elements into compounds, as well as the knowledge of how a diet's content of vitamins and minerals affects health.

Medicinal Herbs

Herbal healing predates all other known forms of medicinal treatments. The Aztecs, Egyptians, Greeks, Chinese, Amarinds, and practically all other known ancient civilizations used plants in some form to cure the whole gamut of human affliction. Through generations they have had the opportunity to analyze and refine their philosophies.

Aloe *Aloe vera*

Aloe is generally used as a salve for minor burns, insect bites, and so on. Rubbing the sap on the skin reduces perspiration and scent.

Arnica *Arnica montana*

Arnica is a yellow flower similar in appearance to a daisy and commonly known as "leopard's bane" or "mountain tobacco." It is excellent in the treatment of bruises and sprains and can alleviate rheumatic pain and similar conditions as long as the patient's epidermis remains unbroken.

Barley Grass *Hordeum vulgare*

Barley has served as a food staple for most cultures and dates back to antiquity. Astounding amounts of vitamins and minerals are found in this simple grass. It contains eleven times the calcium of cow's milk, seven times the vitamin C of oranges, and five times the iron of spinach. Barley is used to make flour, as an additive to cereal foods (iron rations are replete with barley), and used in the brewing of mead and ale. Barley can be used as a food substitute in starvation conditions, slowing the wasting process by a factor of two.

Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*

Bilberry has long been cited as helping remedy poor vision and night blindness, and it can lessen the impact of already existing

retinitis, glaucoma, and myopia. In game terms, consuming bilberries preserved by a successful Herbalism proficiency check adds 25% to the range of characters' night vision or infravision, and it can shorten bouts of temporary blindness by half.

Cat's Claw

A tropical vine that grows in the rainforests and jungles of South America and Asia, it takes its name from the small thorn hidden at the base of the leaves that resembles a cat's claw.

Sometimes referred to as the "sacred herb of the rain forest," this plant is considered a valuable medicinal resource and has been used for hundreds of years to boost the body's immune system.

Echinacea *Echinacesa angustifolio*

The bloom of the echinacea resembles a thin, frail, limp black-eyed Susan. Also known as the purple coneflower, it's indigenous to the central plains of North America. Echinacea is used to fight boils, cysts, and other such bacterial infestations. Echinacea is especially useful for easing laryngitis, tonsillitis, and conditions of the nose and sinus. It's also considered one of the best blood purifiers.

Elderberry *Sambucus candensis*

Elderberries have true medicinal value. In fact, they are a veritable treasure trove of medicinal uses, and they have garnered the title of "medicine chest of the common people." This plant's leaves are used for wounds and chilblains, its flowers are ideal for the treatment of colds and influenza, and its berries provide good relief against rheumatism.

Ephedra *Ephedra sincia*

Also known as *Ma Huang*, this plant is beneficial to sufferers of asthma, whooping cough, and bronchitis due to its abilities to ease spasms of the bronchial tubes. It's a common ingredient in weight-loss products.

Garlic *Allium sativum*

Garlic is one of the few herbs to have garnered a universal recognition for its multitude of properties, in addition to its reputation as a culinary herb and vampire retardant. As a result, it has called the "wonder drug among all herbs." It works as an antibiotic against bacteria, viruses, and parasites. As an inhalation it is used against chronic bronchitis, recurrent colds, and influenza. In the digestive track, garlic aids the growth of natural bacterial flora while combating pathogenic parasites. Externally, it has been utilized as a treatment for ringworm and threadworm.

Ginkgo *Ginkgo biloba*

The ginkgo is the oldest living tree species known to mankind. Ginkgo is credited with enhancing memory and as a viable treatment for vertigo and tinnitus. It might even help counteract the effects of aging. In game terms, regular (daily) consumption of ginkgo gives a +1 bonus to Spell Recovery proficiency checks and lessens the aging side-effects of such spells as *haste* by 1 month for each year of premature aging.

Ginseng *Panax ginseng*

Ginseng has an ancient history that has assured its place in folklore, and it is the most famous Chinese herb. Ginseng is an adaptogen, meaning it normalizes physical functions depending on the body's current need. It enables the patient to attain a physical peak, generally increasing vitality and performance. It lowers high blood pressure and affects depression due to debility and exhaustion. It's even attributed as being an aphrodisiac.

Kelp *Fucus vesiculosus*

Also known as bladderwrack, kelp is a common form of seaweed found on the rocks along the seashore. It has proved useful in the treatment of thyroid glands and goiter. When obesity is associated with a thyroid condition, it has also acted as a dietetic. It can be used both internally and externally to relieve rheumatism as well.

Kola *Cola nitida*

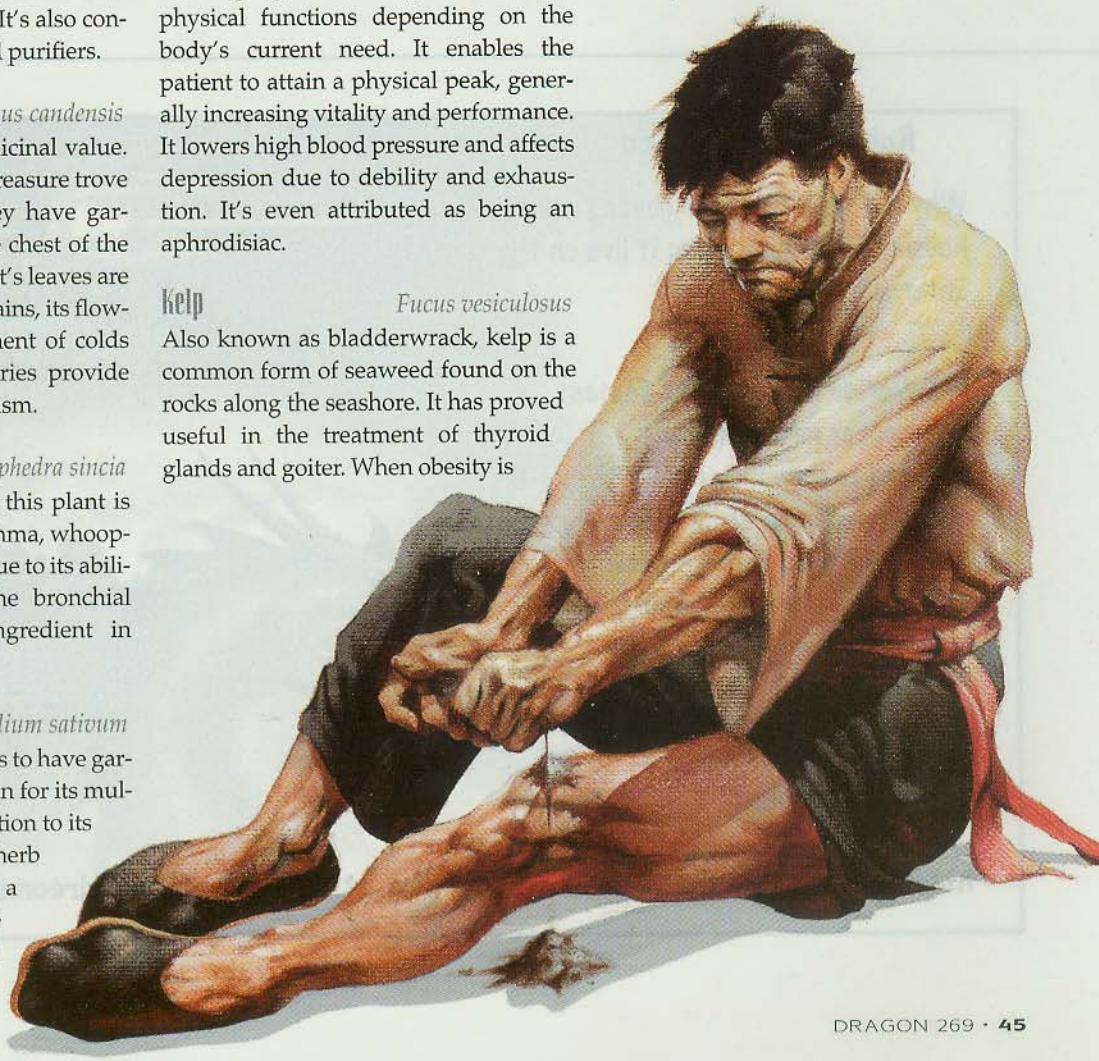
Also called *gotu kola*, this herb was first used in India, where it is an intrinsic part of Ayurvedic medicine. Kola has a distinctive stimulating effect on the human consciousness.

Licorice *Glycyrrhizia glabra*

Aside from its common use in confectionery, licorice has a marked effect upon the endocrine system. Its first recorded application was as a treatment for coughs and lung diseases like tuberculosis. The Chinese prescribed it as a treatment for the spleen, liver, and kidney, while the Japanese used it to treat hepatitis.

Lily of the Valley *Convallaria majalis*

The flowers of the lily of the valley are a cluster of small, bell-like blooms. It has significant cardiopulmonary effects, and it is the most valuable and potent heart remedy that a herbalist uses.



Further Reading

The Alternative Medicine Handbook by Barrie R. Cassileth, Ph.D.

The Complete Illustrated Holistic Herbal by David Hoffmann.

The Honest Herbalist: A Sensible Guide to the Use of Herbs and Related Remedies by Dr. Varro Tyler.

A Survey of Alternative Therapies and Herbal Medications by Dr. Stephen Adams.

Other AD&D Sources

Sages & Specialists by Matt Forbeck.

The Complete Druid's Handbook by David Pulver.

Myrrh *Commiphora molmol*

Made famous by the Three Wise Men from the story of the birth of Christ, myrrh was often used to combat the common cold due to its anti-microbial properties. The dried sap ranges from transparent yellow to opaque sienna.

Passion Flower *Passiflora incarnata*

Passion flower is the herb of choice for treating insomnia, aiding the transition into restful sleep without any narcotic side-effects. It can also be used to combat hysteria, seizures, and nervous ticks. It has been very successful in treating the viral infection of the nerves called shingles.

Plantain *Plantago major L.*

Plantain is a virulent weed with 250 different species found across the globe. Both the greater and ribwort plantain have valuable healing properties. The plantain is helpful against lung disorders.

Quassia *Picrasma excelsor*

As with all bitters, quassia stimulates the production of saliva and digestive juices and so increases the appetite. It can be used in cases of anorexia nervosa to induce hunger and stimulate digestion. It's used as an expulsion for threadworms and tapeworms. Externally, it combats lice and tick infestations.

Self-Heal *Prunella vulgaris*

As its name implies, self-heal has long been used as a general wound-healing herb. The fresh leaf can be used, or a poultice or compress can be made to aid in the cleaning of cuts and wounds. A flexible herb, it can also be used as a gargle for mouthsores or a lotion or ointment for bleeding piles. This plant is a major ingredient in all potions of healing, and it can fetch 1d10 sp for each fresh leaf.

St. John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum*

Perhaps the most famous of all herbal medicines, St. John's Wort is a bushy perennial plant with numerous yellow flowers. It has been used as an herbal remedy since the Middle Ages, and many believed it to have magical powers to protect one from evil.

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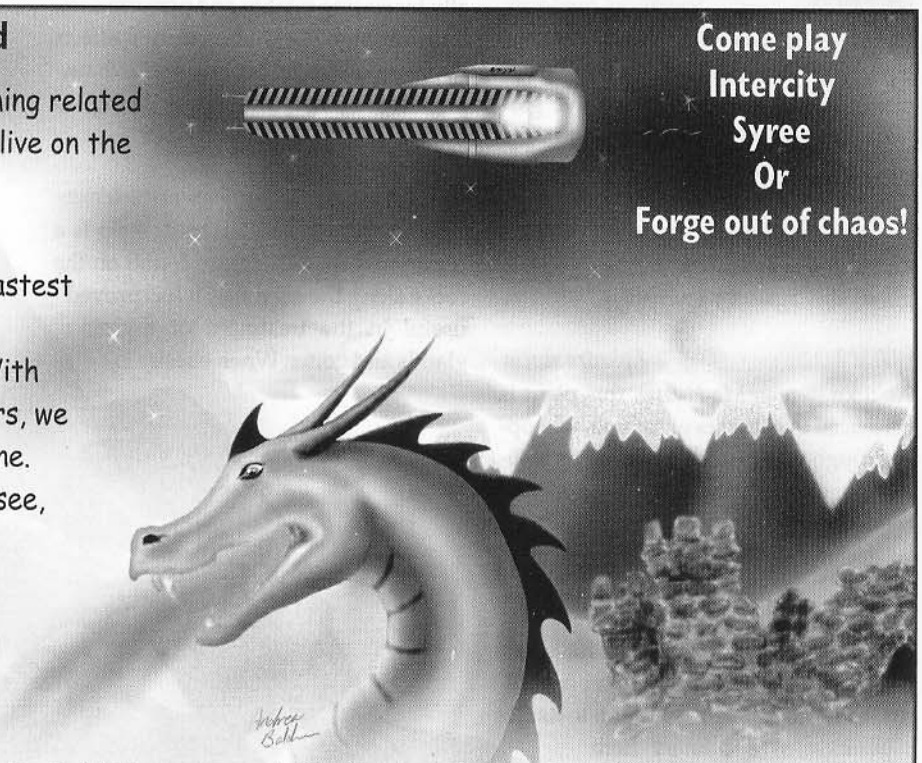

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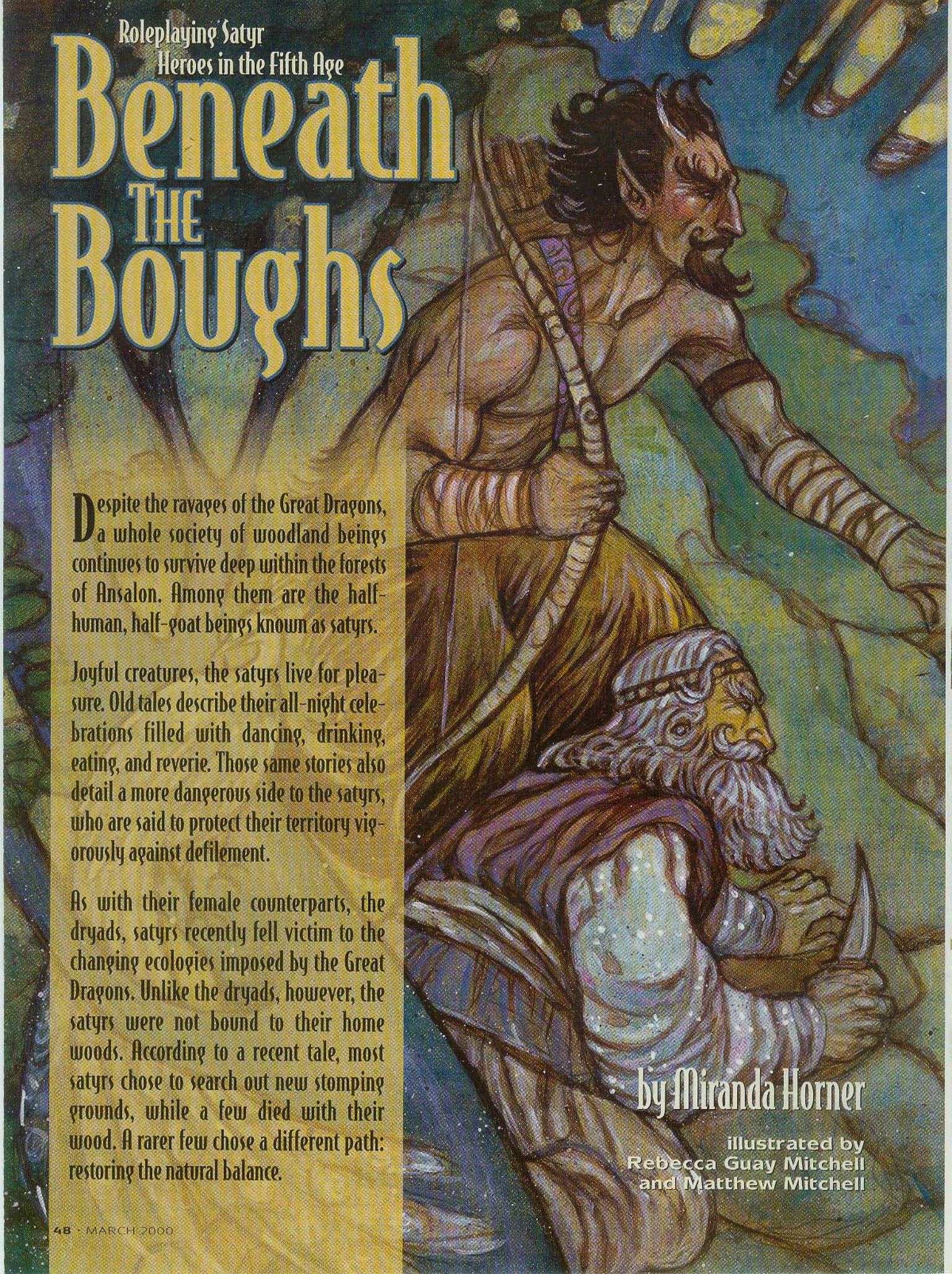
Roleplaying Satyr Heroes in the Fifth Age

Beneath the Boughs



Despite the ravages of the Great Dragons, a whole society of woodland beings continues to survive deep within the forests of Ansalon. Among them are the half-human, half-goat beings known as satyrs.

Joyful creatures, the satyrs live for pleasure. Old tales describe their all-night celebrations filled with dancing, drinking, eating, and reverie. Those same stories also detail a more dangerous side to the satyrs, who are said to protect their territory vigorously against defilement.

As with their female counterparts, the dryads, satyrs recently fell victim to the changing ecologies imposed by the Great Dragons. Unlike the dryads, however, the satyrs were not bound to their home woods. According to a recent tale, most satyrs chose to search out new stomping grounds, while a few died with their wood. A rarer few chose a different path: restoring the natural balance.

by Miranda Horner

illustrated by Rebecca Guay Mitchell and Matthew Mitchell

Birth

With the recent sightings of satyrs, more has been learned about their society. While some sages insist that satyrs mate with dryads to produce satyr and dryad offspring, their claims are only partially true according to recent investigations.

A scholar currently within the Qualinesti Forest recently reported that matings between satyrs and dryads always produce a satyr offspring, while dryads are born only from their parent trees. This source also claims that these matings occur during satyr woodland celebrations and result in a satyr births in early spring or late summer. (Dryads attached to trees tend to be less active during the winter months; thus they don't "celebrate" much during that season.) The dryad has an extremely easy labor compared to that of most humanlike creatures, and a satyr the size of a human baby is born within minutes.

Growing Up

It takes several days for the hooves of a satyr to harden, so the dryad mother keeps the child within her tree during that time. Afterward, the dryad contacts the father (or an uncle) and presents the baby to him. According to the prevalent tales, the baby satyr has no horns yet, and its furry legs have more hair than its head for the first few months, although one can tell by looking at the child whether it will have tan, light brown, or red skin. Once within his father's arms, the baby is taken to the local satyr colony.

Although the natural lifespan of a satyr is still a mystery to outsiders, it's clear that a satyr grows to adulthood much sooner than does a human. Within a year, the satyr child has grown the beginnings of his black horns, and he stands about 3 feet tall. He cannot yet grow a beard, but his hair is coarse, curly, and long. Within the next year, his beard fills in, his horns are fully developed, and he has attained his full height but not his full musculature. By the third year, the satyr is at full maturity and must find his own hollow tree, unless his colony resides in a cave.

While the more poetic sages comment wistfully about the brevity of satyr childhood, the creatures' behavior throughout their lives shows that they never truly grow up.

Satyr Milestones

During the 3 years that it takes to grow to adulthood, the young satyr passes through several rites of passage. From the moment he becomes part of a colony, he takes part in woodland celebrations, usually taking his place in the merry chases around the woods or in the dances that invariably occur. These pursuits grant him speed and a familiarity with the local terrain. The young satyr also takes his child-name during his first woodland celebration. Examples of child-names include Red-tail, Deer-stalker, or other conjoined terms that describe appearance or demeanor. By the end of the first year, the young satyr has learned how to hide traces of his passing, to blend into the forest, to move silently through the wood, and similar skills.

During the young satyr's second year, the colony elders watch him to determine his musical and magical talent. While all satyrs have an innate ability for music, certain satyrs can combine this talent

with an inner magic. This ability usually shows itself in subtle ways, such as when the young satyr hums to the piping of an elder and increases the magical enchantment of the tune, allowing even the trees to move in time to the music.

If a youngster shows such a talent, then his father or other mentor takes the satyr on a quest to create his own set of *satyr pipes*. Although the components for the *pipes* are usually easily located, the journey and construction of the *pipes* is harder. Usually the young satyr must vanquish a foe before the *pipes* can be completed. The exact nature of such quests is a well-kept secret among the satyrs, for nothing more about them is known. Once the *pipes* are finished, the satyr begins to learn to play them.

By the end of the third year, the young satyr is given an adult name (such as Krellen or Mikos) and presides over a woodland celebration. If he has *pipes*, he also leads the music for the evening. Once the celebration is over (usually at dawn), the satyr is considered an adult and can actively take part in dealings within the forest, including the defense against intruders.

Satyrs in the Fifth Age

Although some wooded areas of Ansalon have been unchanged over the last 30 or so years, several others have not been as lucky. The depredations of the Great Dragons have left many satyrs homeless. Consequently, they have either moved into intact wooded areas (Darken Wood, for example, now has a population that resembles the days before the War of the Lance), or they have become wanderers. In time, these wanderers find a place to settle down, preferably near a dryad grove, or their travels change them into something more than their forebears: heroes.

Those who follow the latter path still maintain their former playfulness, but it is tempered even more with the purpose of actively seeking balance in the world. They might impel themselves to protect nature wherever it needs protection, or they can simply help others utilize nature without destroying its balance. They can obsessively pursue the destruction of the Great Dragons, or they can choose goals that serve to lessen the impact of other evil forces upon the land (such as minimizing the impact of the minotaurs' logging practices up in Endscape in Kern). How each satyr accomplishes these goals is up to him, but in the end, balance and nature are both served.

In the past, satyrs were not known as travelers, and this is with good reason. Whenever they leave the area that they grew up in and protected, they lose the magical protection that the forest or wood of their birth extended to them. If they ever settle down for more than a year and actively protect the area they live in, this magical protection again takes affect. Essentially, they establish a link to the land they love, and this link (or, in some cases, rapport with one of the setting's nature deities) grants them protection from the magic of others. As a being of nature and of magic, though, the satyr never completely loses a basic protection from magical effects.

Description

Satyrs have the arms, head, and torso of a male human; the rest of their bodies resembles the hindquarters of a goat. Two sharp horns jut out from their head, and their hair tends to be wiry and curly. A satyr's skin coloration can range from tan to light brown, though occasionally a satyr has red skin. Additionally, a satyr's hair color tends toward a medium to dark brown, but some have reddish highlights. Most satyrs have black hooves and horns, and their eye color covers the same range as humans, with a few extraordinary exceptions, such as brilliant green or light amber.

Roleplaying a Satyr

Satyrs are always male. While they do have a festive bent, they don't always think of the next opportunity to celebrate life and carouse. Players should use their own judgment to decide how often their satyr heroes feel the need to start or take part in a woodland celebration. A good rule of thumb is that they instigate a celebration (or go find one) at least every time they accomplish a specific goal. Additionally, satyr heroes are not limited to the woods when it comes time to celebrate life or an accomplishment; they can easily take part in the fun at a local tavern.

Satyrs respect life. They don't normally have problems with those who need lumber for building or fires or game for food, but the moment someone starts endangering the natural balance of a given area, a satyr hero takes notice. Depending on how the satyr hero is being roleplayed, he might attempt to counsel the ignorant offenders, punish them, or find some solution in between those two extremes. Additionally, they have a great deal of respect for the Kagonesti elves (or wood elves and druids in other campaign settings).

Satyrs as Player Characters

The following description replaces the information on satyrs listed in the *Monstrous Manual*™ tome.

Classes Allowed: Ranger (to 13th level), cleric (to 11th level), cleric/fighter (to 11th/15th level), thief (to 12th level), bard (to 18th level).

Initial Languages: Common, Elf, Dryad, Centaur (if any are near their initial home).

Alignments Allowed: NG, CG, N.

Weapon Proficiencies: As allowed by chosen class.

Special Abilities: Satyr heroes can gain satyr pipes (see magical item description) either automatically or through a quest (DM's discretion). They also gain a +2 bonus on surprise rolls, blend with forest or wood foliage so that they are 90% undetectable (giving opponents a –2 penalty to surprise rolls), and possess infravision to a distance of 60 feet. Satyrs can also attack with their horns, causing 2d4 points of damage. Additionally, satyrs gain a 50% magic resistance when within 10 miles of their birthplace. This bonus fades to 10% once they leave their home forest.

Joining the Adventure

DMs can find several ways to bring a satyr hero into their campaigns. After the players generate their heroes, DMs should speak with any satyr heroes to find out what type of background they wish their heroes to have. Here are some sample guidelines on how to get the hero involved and keep them committed to the current quest:

• DMs can start with a quest for the satyr's *pipes*. If the satyr begins in a village, then his elder can give him a start-

ing point. If not, the DM can introduce another satyr who can guide him, a dryad who points out that he should probably get his *pipes*, or some other story element to get him started. DMs can either introduce the satyr hero to the other heroes quickly (they meet at an appropriate part of the current campaign) or have a solo session with the player to set up the situation beforehand. Sample quests can include persuading a forest creature to help him find deceased large or giant birds so that he can use the bones for his *pipes*, finding some reeds or bamboo and defeating a rabid animal that is lurking in the area, or simply vanquishing a minor foe of the forest and looting his or her goods for useful pieces or tools to make the *pipes*.

• DMs can set up some other interesting situations not involving *pipes* that would allow a satyr hero to join the current campaign, or at least meet the other heroes before the campaign truly gets started. For example, the heroes can meet at a forest or town celebration. Perhaps a local holiday has caused the inhabitants of that area to break out the ale and start singing and dancing. This can easily draw a satyr PC into the party's midst. Many other options exist, of course, and are limited only by the DM's imagination.

• Once the satyr has started playing, the DM can continually craft small adventure hooks to keep him involved in the current quest. Perhaps the PCs are trying to save some elves from the evil ogres. (See *Rise of the Titans* for an adventure similar to this.) Before they leave, a scholar could approach the group and request that they help her find a lost tome of Irda lore that lies somewhere inside the nation of Blöde near Hatl (or something similar). The scholar can also hint that she believes that when they find the tome, they'll also find another book with tree lore and magic or old Irda songs. The DM should choose something that will either help the satyr complete a piece of his quest or that simply interests the character. Once the campaign begins, it should be easy to figure out what might tickle the fancy of a particular satyr PC. Of course, the current quest that the PCs are attempting to complete might be enough to keep the satyr PC interested in the game!

New Magical Items

DMs, or even players, can use the rules presented in the *Player's Handbook* or *Heroes of Sorcery* to create the following magical items for satyr PCs. As mentioned earlier, satyrs must quest for their *pipes*, but whether that occurs before or after PC creation is up to the DM and the player. The other items are created using materials found in nature. A search for such items can also create quests for the satyr PC to accomplish during the campaign. If not, a group of satyrs at a woodland celebration can create these items, which lessens the research time by 4 weeks or the spell point cost by 10 points in a SAGA game.

Satyr Pipes

A lot of the satyr's ability to manipulate others comes from the set of *pipes* he uses. When the satyr completes his quest to create these *pipes*, he finds himself with a magical item that allows him to charm others, cause sleep, and inspire fear in others within a 60-foot radius. (These abilities translate to the *charm person*, *sleep*, and *cause fear* spells, respectively, cast at the satyr's level of experience.) Those affected can resist the item's effects with their a saving throw vs. spell or with their Spirit score, so the satyr isn't always successful. The chosen effect lasts 1d6 hours or until dispelled, and if the victim successfully resisted, the *pipes* cannot be used against him or her successfully during that same encounter. Additionally, bards in an AD&D game, who have their own spell-like abilities, can attempt to counteract the *pipes'* effects. (In the SAGA game rules, bard skills have not been established, so DMs can come up with their own rules or simply ask the bard PC to make an *average Presence (Presence)* action to see if his or her skills are more effective than the satyr's skills.) Only the satyr who creates these *pipes* can use them.

XP Value (for creation during play only): 2,000

GP Value: 10

Ring of Indefatigable Dancing

Part of the rite that creates this *ring* involves a satyr who can wear this band of ash on his finger and dance from the moment the woodland celebration begins until it ends. The magic created by a set of *satyr pipes* infuses the dancing satyr's energy and dancing skill into the *ring* over the course of the celebration. (DMs can set up a series of actions or checks to see if the dancing satyr can actually do this.) Once created, the *ring* causes anyone who wears it to immediately start dancing much like the satyr did during the celebration. For every minute worn, the character must make a successful saving throw vs. spell (or an *average Willpower* action) or immediately start dancing. One of the boons about this *ring* is that it provides the dancer with the energy needed to dance, so the wearer need never worry about exhaustion while wearing it and dancing. The moment the dancing stops or the moment the wearer takes it off, he or she must succeed at a Constitution or *average Endurance* check or fall asleep within 1–10 minutes. (Roll 1d10 for AD&D games or draw a Fate Card for SAGA games.)

If the person wearing the *ring* has music to dance to, then the music can

Satyrs as Heroes: SAGA Rules

The following description takes the place of that for satyrs in *The Bestiary*.

Ability Scores

Agility	7 minimum
Reason	5 maximum

Ability Codes

Perception	"A" minimum
Strength	"D" maximum
Spirit	"B" minimum
Presence	"C" maximum

Other Requirements

Satyrs must have access to the mystic sphere of animism, which they access by playing their *pipes*.

Advantages

As heroes, satyrs can utilize their racial ability to camouflage themselves in woodland or forest settings, gaining an automatic trump bonus to any actions in such instances. They can also cast spells that charm others, put others to sleep, or cause fear in others by playing their *pipes* (an *easy Spirit* action). Satyrs can also attack with their horns (a +4 damage rating).

Disadvantages

Satyr heroes must have their *pipes* to cast certain types of spells more easily (see "Advantages"); otherwise all spells follow the normal SAGA spellcasting system. Additionally, because their natural setting is in the woods or forest, satyrs gain no trump bonuses while within cities or towns.

guide the type of dancing that the wearer feels impelled to do. This *ring* doesn't confer knowledge of different styles of dancing, however. Additionally, if a satyr plays *pipes* around a person wearing this *ring*, then 1–10 others find themselves drawn in unless they make a successful saving throw vs. spell or a *challenging Willpower* action. These others are subject to their own Constitution or Endurance scores, though, so if they try to keep up with the wearer of the *ring*, they might find themselves worn out once the party is over.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 3,000

New Spells

Each of these spells is specific to satyr PCs; unless otherwise noted, they work only in wooded areas. Players of the SAGA game should read saving throws as resistance checks and note conversion information in parentheses. See the sidebar for other conversion information.

Sharpen Horns

Level: 1
Sphere: Animal
Range: 0
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level (10 maximum)
Area of Effect: Caster
Components: V, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Saving Throw: None

By stroking a stag's or antelope's bone along his horns and calling upon his god for strength, the satyr can sharpen and strengthen his horns so that they cause an additional 1d4 points of damage to a foe upon a successful hit. This spell works only upon satyrs and it works anywhere.

Woodland Party

Level: 2
Sphere: Animal
Range: 50 yards/3 levels (200 yards maximum)
Duration: 10 rounds
Area of Effect: Special
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 turn
Saving Throw: Negates

Originally used to attract denizens of the woodlands for celebrations, this spell can be used by the satyr PC to summon 1–10 intelligent woodland creatures (to a maximum of 2–20 HD or 6–60 Endurance score) for a single purpose (such as attacking a satyr PC's foes). Satyrs must play their *pipes* and dance for the duration of the spell's casting time. The creatures show up within 1–3 rounds and can include dryads, other satyrs, sprites, and other creatures of higher than 3 Intelligence (2 Reason) that live within the spell's range. (DMs can use the table under the *call woodland beings* spell if they wish.) Those called forth receive a saving throw or can take a Willpower action to avoid the call, and if one of the PC's party is a known despoiler of nature, then they receive another one to see if they can leave. If the caster personally knows a being in the area, then he can double his range for that one being.

The summoned creatures expect a reward of dancing, singing, and eating afterward, however. If the satyr PC does not provide at least four songs (about 30 minutes) worth of frivolity and joy, the spell will not work for the satyr again until he provides some sort of festivities for the summoned creatures. The party can continue after the satyr PC leaves if the satyr PC called forth another satyr (30% chance to do so or a 1–3 result on a Fate Card draw).

Follow the Music

Level: 3
Sphere: Charm
Range: 10 yards
Duration: 1 hour
Area of Effect: Special
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 round
Saving Throw: Negates

By playing the pipes and dancing around in a bit of a jig, the satyr caster can draw away a number of foes and set them on a merry chase. The music first attracts those listening at a rate of 1 Hit Dice per caster level (up to a maximum of 12 HD or a combined 36 Endurance) and mildly distracts them from their fight (adds a –1 cumulative penalty to attack and damage) for the first 5 rounds or minutes. Targets receive a saving throw vs. spell to negate the effects. (Use the victims' Spirit scores or Essence scores to resist the spell in a SAGA campaign.)

If the combat hasn't ended after these first 5 rounds have passed, the affected individuals get an itchy sense that the foes they're fighting aren't the ones they should be facing. They break off from combat completely and start looking around for their true foes. At that point, the victims are still somewhat aware of the satyr's compatriots, so they avoid blows (no attacks of opportunity) as normal but do not return any. By the seventh round of combat, the satyr can either guide the affected foes away from

the combat by breaking away himself or simply allow things to stand as they are. If the satyr heads away, still playing, the victims of the spell follow him bemusedly. The spell continues for as long as the satyr plays or until the duration ends, whichever comes first. If the satyr tries to lead the victims to their deaths (by sending them off a cliff or something similar), then the victims receive another saving throw to negate, with a +4 bonus. (SAGA PCs can attempt to resist the spell again with a +4 bonus to their Spirit or Essence scores.) Satyrs can cast this spell anywhere, but they must play their *pipes* and dance to maintain the spell.

Forest Feast

Level: 4
Sphere: Animal/Summoning
Range: 200 yards
Duration: 1d3+1 hours
Area of Effect: Special
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 turn
Saving Throw: Negates

By playing his *pipes* and dancing, the caster can alert the denizens of the forest that it's time for a feast. Those within the range of the spell can make saving throws to avoid gathering food, drink, or other supplies, but most want to take part in the celebration, so they receive a –4 penalty to the saving throw or a –2 penalty to their Spirit or Essence score for resisting this spell. All manner of animals bring food for themselves and for one other of their kind. Other satyrs bring wine, dryads gather dead wood for the firepit, nearby nymphs help provide water, and smaller creatures bring forth vegetables, insects, or whatever their own appetites run to. In the end, the spellcasting satyr has enough food and drink to feed everyone roughly twice over.

Any non-forest-dwelling, intelligent in the area might be drawn into the feast by one of the satyrs or dryads so that they can help prepare for the festivities. The only way the satyr will have meat at the feast is if another satyr, humanoid, or carnivorous creature comes forward with a recent kill (or with meat provisions of some sort). There is a flat 30% chance (1–3 result on a Fate Card draw) that someone brings meat. At the feast, everyone is on their honor not to kill another being attending, but if a conflict arises—such as a puma killing an attending rabbit family—the feast immediately falls apart in a rather chaotic manner. Once the spell is cast, the satyr calling the feast can take part in the fun, though he might be called upon to help settle tempers if they start to fray. Thankfully for the forest creatures, this latter situation happens very rarely. Those attending this feast gain not only food and drink, but also heal 1d8+1 points of damage for every two levels of the caster or draw one Hand of Fate card after the feast is over, which usually takes 1d3+1 hours. (In SAGA campaigns, draw a Fate Card: A result of a white aura card equals 3 hours, a red aura equal 2 hours, and a black aura equals 1 hour; add one point to this.) If an evil outsider attempts to break into the feast, every animal attending leaps to the defense, so PCs can also gain the benefits of a temporary safe haven.

Saga Rules for Satyr Spells

Sharpen Horns
Level: 1
Sphere: Alteration
Range: Personal (1)
Duration: 15 minutes (3)
Area of Effect: Individual (1)
Components: V, M
Casting Time: Invocation: 1 minute (4)
Saving Throw: None
Effect: Troublesome (2)
Difficulty/Cost: 11

Woodland Party
Level: 2
Sphere: Mentalism
Range: Near missile (3) to artillery (5)
Duration: 15 minutes (3)
Area of Effect: Large group (4)
Components: V, S
Casting Time: Invocation: 10 minutes (3)
Saving Throw: Negates
Effect: Troublesome (2)
Difficulty/Cost: 15 to 17

Follow the Music
Level: 3
Sphere: Mentalism
Range: Near missile (3)
Duration: 15 minutes (3) to 1 hour (5)
Area of Effect: Individual (1) to small group (3)
Components: V, S
Casting Time: Invocation: 1 minutes (4)
Saving Throw: Negates
Effect: Impeding (4)
Difficulty/Cost: 15 to 19

Forest Feast
Level: 4
Sphere: Mentalism/Animism
Range: Near missile (3) to artillery (5)
Duration: 1 hour (5)
Area of Effect: Crowd (5)
Components: V, S
Casting Time: Invocation: 10 minutes (3)
Saving Throw: Negates
Effect: 1 card/point (1)
Difficulty/Cost: 17 to 19

Miranda continues to wander the continent of Ansalon with her red pen of distinction, though she is often called away to edit adventures and supplements for other worlds under the control of Wizards of the Coast.

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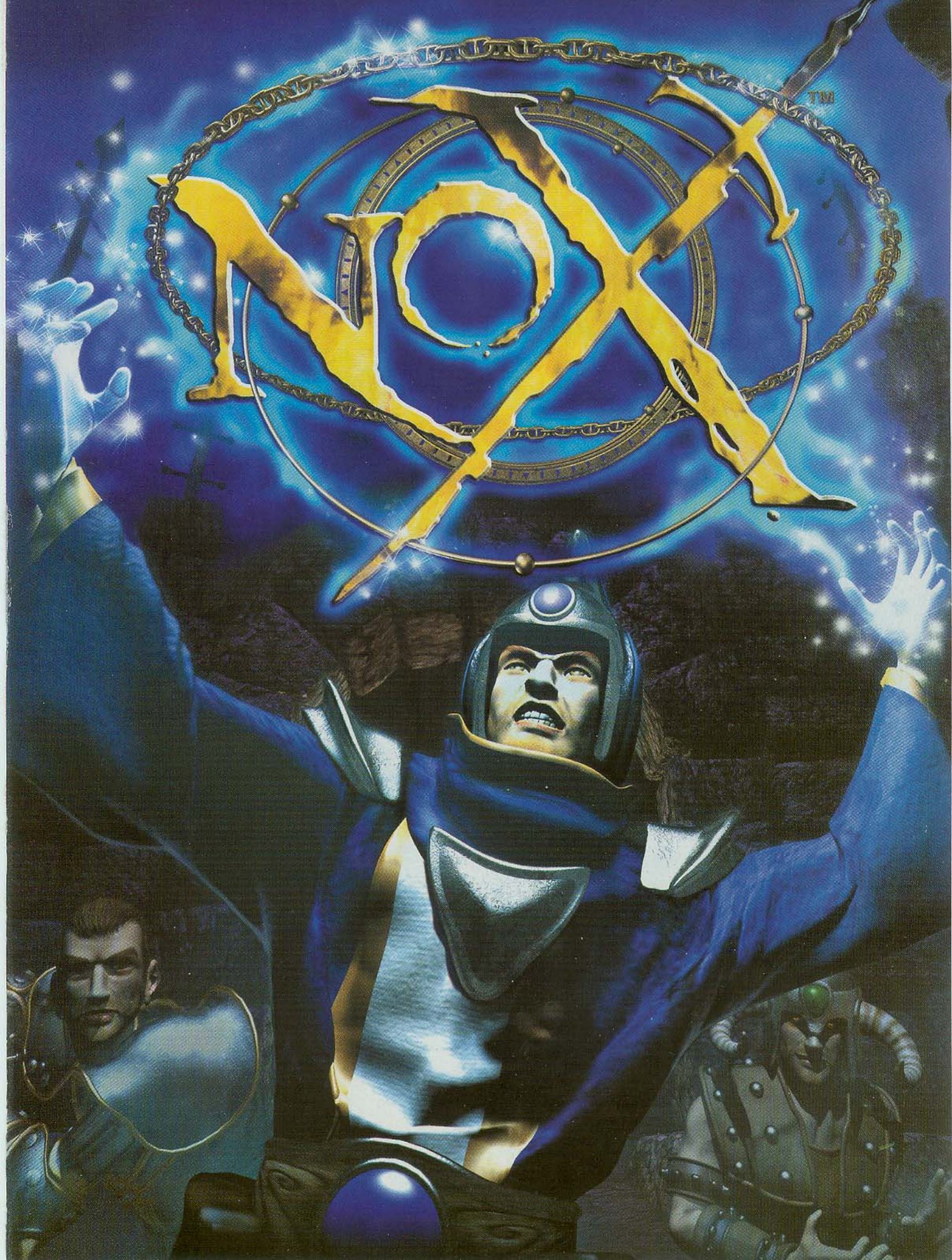
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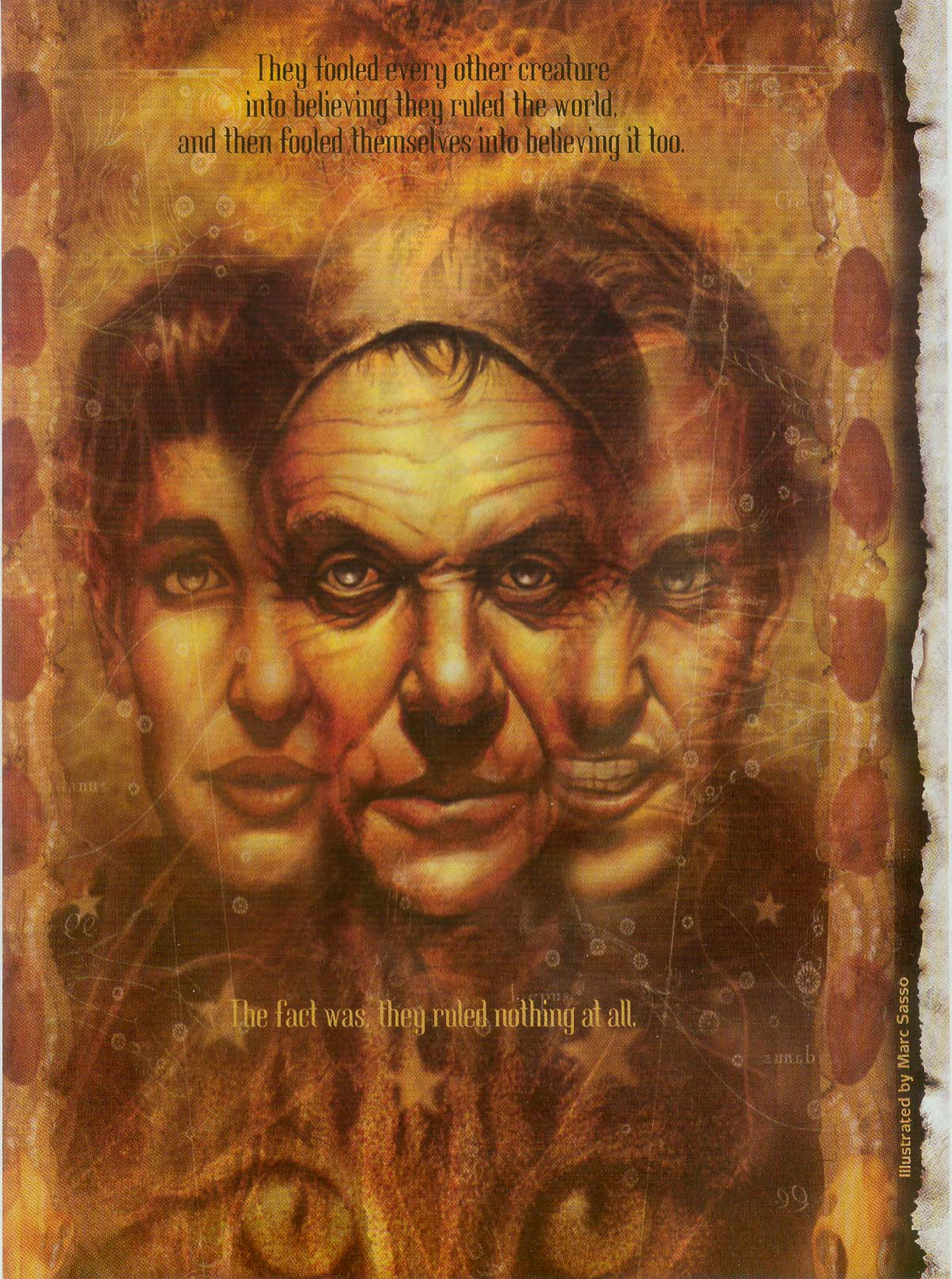
They fooled every other creature
into believing they ruled the world,
and then fooled themselves into believing it too.
The fact was, they ruled nothing at all.
Illustrated by Marc Sasso

Fiction by
J. Robert King

All Too Familiar

My master was brilliant and righteous—a perfect murderer. He had to be brilliant to fool everyone about what he was really doing. He had to be righteous to fool himself. Make no mistake, though, he was a murderer.

"This spell will save us all," he said. His white eyebrows glowed in the greenish fire of the cauldron. In withered fingers, he clutched his staff. It sparked magic as he stirred it through the brew. "Death stalks every man, even young men like you, Corey." He smiled kindly at me, and his lashes batted as though they were patting me on the shoulder. "But perhaps not after tonight."

"Yes, Master Belius," I said dutifully. I was eager to please. This sulfurous laboratory was no palace, and my woven mat in the corner was no feather bed, but they were better than sleeping beneath the canal bridge. "Death and I are on a first-name basis."

That seemed to startled the old sorcerer. Rumpled eyelids drew back from blood-crazed eyes. He glared at me. "You know nothing of death. Starvation isn't death. It is failure. A knife in the back isn't death. It is betrayal. Those deaths can be avoided by a wise man...."

"Yes, Master Belius."

A faraway look came to his face. He stared at the stone wall as though he saw a specter beyond it, drifting inevitably nearer. "True death is the gradual erosion of time. Even a wise man cannot escape true death." He took a shuddering breath, and then smiled vaguely. "Until now." With a glance at the tray in my hands, he said, "Put the hearts down there."

The tray held twelve baby turtle hearts, harvested moments before by yours truly. During my canal days, I'd learned to trap and slaughter and cook turtles, all for want of food. It was nobler still to harvest them for immortality—that's what Master Belius had told me. I was all too willing to believe. I set the tray down on a table beside the cauldron.

"Place them, one at a time, in the brew," he instructed, still stirring.

In red fingers, I reverently lifted the warm muscles and slid them into the cauldron. As each entered, light flared deep in the mixture, and air mounded up in viscous bubbles.

The masters' attention turned toward the potion. "They live two hundred fifty years, those turtles. Each heart is a quarter millennium. Twelve hearts are three thousand years."

"Yes, Master," I replied, "but three thousand years is not immortality."

His lips drew back in a smile like a set of chisels. "This is only a start. There are older creatures still," he said as I slipped the final heart into the cauldron. "Fetch the bucket."

"Yes, Master," I replied, "but three thousand years is not immortality."

I retreated across the dark tower, pausing at a pitcher and basin to wash the blood from my hands. At my request, the master had arranged for this station, even enchanting the water to remain ever pure.

He glanced impatiently over his shoulder and shook his head. "That's why I chose you, you know, Corey.... Of all the vagrants, only you were clean. I thought, if he can keep himself clean, he can keep my laboratory clean." It was true. The room had been an absolute shambles when I had first arrived. Master Belius had been unable to find any of his specimens. I had brought order out of chaos. "But your fastidiousness is still damned annoying."

Drying my hands, I lifted a pail filled with riling white worms. They squirmed beneath my knuckles as I approached the cauldron. "Why worms? They're not long lived."

"These worms are," Master Belius said, extending a knife to me. "Cut them up, Corey."

I repeatedly drew the blade through the riling mound, slicing as many of the vermin as I could with each pass. They did not bleed, not even white ooze. As soon as each wound was struck, it sealed itself, and the two halves of the creature wriggled away from each other.

All Too Familiar

"That is how they reproduce," Master Belius explained. "They do not couple, as we do. They split themselves, and each half grows. They do not die. Every worm in that bucket is hundreds of thousands of years old." Setting his staff aside, he took the knife from my hand and grasped the bucket handle. He poured the squirmy things into the cauldron. The liquid seemed to come alive. Its surface boiled with dark power. "One sip of this brew, and I—and any mortal—can live for hundreds of thousands of years."

"Yes, Master." I watched, wide-eyed. A year ago, it had seemed my life would not last even days longer. Now before me bubbled an elixir that promised eternal life—or nearly so. "But even hundreds of thousands of years is not an eternity."

He stared hard at me. "To give mortal flesh true immortality, Corey, I would have to sacrifice something that was immortal."

I nodded, smiling. "You would have to sacrifice a god."

"Or," Master Belius replied, "a human soul."

I looked up in time to see the knife tip as it entered my eye. Then, there was blindness, and the awful sound of metal punching through bone, and the hot ooze of brain.

Then I was dead.

Every tomcat is a king. It's our birthright.

It's tough to live on the street when you're an orphan. It's easy when you're a cat.

Master Belius had been right, you see, about the immortality of the soul, but he had been wrong about being able to sacrifice it. While he plunged my corpse into his elixir, my soul fled away to the eternal wheel. While he poured the potion down his throat, I poured my soul into a new body. Master Belius walked away from that night young and virtually immortal. I walked away feline and strikingly tortoise shell.

In some ways, he had done me a favor. As a human, I'd been lowest of the low. Reincarnated as a tomcat, I was a king. Every tomcat is a king. It's our birthright.

That's the great irony. Humans think they rule the world, but most humans don't even rule themselves. They live in big, powerful societies but are individually weak. Only a few people rule, and everybody else is ruled. Only a few feast, and the rest starve. The king has ten wives, and the wretch under the bridge hasn't even one. Master Belius was one of the rulers, and so he thought everyone wanted to live forever. I'd been one of the outcasts, and I knew most people wanted simply to live right now.

As a cat, everything was different. Every tomcat is a society of one, a kingdom unto himself. The world is his banquet, and he feasts on whatever he finds. Every alley is his royal promenade, and on every balcony waits a kitty in heat. Of course there are fights. Fights every night, or twice a night, or three times. But what is the point of having these needle teeth and razor claws and meaty shoulders and spiky hackles except to fight? For a tomcat, fighting is as much fun as mating. I was a king, and the city of Terraloo was mine, from the canal bridge to the royal palace—even to the tower of brilliant, righteous, murderous Belius.

Since my death, young sorcerer Belius had become a philanthropist. He'd drunk only a cupful of his immortality elixir, decanting the rest into small bottles. In his new, youthful form, he carried the stuff to the king and nobles, the scholars and priests. Old men and women became young again. The whole benevolent leadership of Terraloo regained its youth and gained immortality anew. Never again need the vagrants under the canal bridge fear that the good king might die. Never again need the poor folk pine that the brilliance of the scholars might be lost in death, or the righteousness of the priests be snuffed by the hand of God. Master Belius had even saved one bottle of his elixir—half a bottle, really, with enough chunks of heart and worm to prevent a healthy quaff—and poured it into the central well. It was perhaps enough to grant a few serfs an extra year. All of these benefits Sorcerer Belius had purchased for the reasonable price of twelve baby turtle hearts, a thousand eternal worms, and one young vagrant.

What could be more righteous than sacrificing one man to save a nation?

Belius had fooled everybody, even himself. I intended to point out his error.

It was a beautiful spring morning in Terraloo when I set out to get my revenge. Dew lay thick on the riverbanks. Wagons creaked through the market. Yesterday's catch filled a rubbish cart while new crates of fish were opened on the cobbles. I had my pick of day-old fish—what a banquet! Afterward, I knocked down a tabby just for fun and made my way toward the royal palace.

I strolled up a crumbling wall, leapt to the bowing shingles above, and followed the roof peaks—the Cat's Highway. Overcrowding and dilapidation made for human misery, but they were the stuff of feline heaven. Most of the roofs I crossed were too rotten to hold human weight, which kept them from chasing me off. The crooked chimneys were fire hazards for those who lived below, but were warm shoulder-scratchers for a cat on his way to royalty. The mice nesting in the thatch provided snacks along the way. The rainwater that dripped slowly into sickbeds allowed me a placid drink. Gables loomed low over human heads but lifted cat paws three stories high.

I leapt from building to building. The narrow, crooked lanes below were narrower and crookeder aloft. Where there was no better route, I crossed with impunity into another tom's territory—marked with a jealous reek. Occasionally, the offended cat would challenge me. It made no matter. I had a trick of rearing up on my hind legs, manlike, and hissing ferociously. That one always scared off natural cats and convinced other reincarnated humans to let me pass.

Soon, the welcoming rankle of the slums gave way to the royal district. I slid down a rain trough, jumped to the ground,

and dashed up the mossy buttress of the district wall. It was a grim stone bulwark—grim for the soldiers who spent long hours pacing there, but a glad place for a nimble cat. I vaulted from battlement to battlement, pounced once in the center of a guard-house dice-match, and scampered out atop the garrison building. Down across the parade grounds, I reached the king's cathedral. Aerial bridges and flying buttresses gave me easy access to the castle beyond.

The king's castle was a dreamy structure, festooned with gargoyles and statuary. I skipped lightly across the stony heads of the past monarchs, pausing for a quick lick-down within one coronet. I was still fastidious. Just over my head, the masons had kindly set a six-inch ledge of stone that ran the whole facade. It was like a royal road. I trotted along it to an ancient tower overrun with ivy.

It was the oldest part of the palace and had housed generations of sorcerers—the power behind the throne. The tower windows were small and choked with leaves, except for the topmost one. There, brimstone and noxious smoke had kept the ivy more trim. That was where Belius had his laboratory. That was where I would begin my ploy.

I climbed. The vines were so thick around the tower, it seemed a giant scratching post. In moments, I had reached the crumbling windowsill. I scrambled onto it and was grateful that Belius was nowhere to be seen.

I studied the battlefield.

Belius's laboratory was an absolute wreck. Grimy walls sported colonies of moss. Rafters dangled cobweb curtains. Across the dusty tabletop, jars of grotesque specimens lay in disarray. Unidentifiable stains covered the floor. My mat still lay in the corner by the stairs, though now it was a bed only for mold. The ghost-image of my body remained in the woven reeds.

That was the reason I was here—vengeance for the creature I used to be.

I leapt to the floor. Through my pads, I sensed tingling energy. Despite Master Belius's rigorous neglect, he still maintained a magical alarm in his laboratory. I would have only a few moments before he arrived.

I began on the cluttered table. Lifting vials with my teeth, I placed them, in alphabetical order, on the component shelves. A few quick swipes of my tail dusted the shelves, and a few more cleaned the tabletop. Next, I leapt into the rafters and ran their length, gathering cobwebs in my fur. Back on the windowsill, a few simple shakes sent most of the dust wafting out on the spring air. The rest disappeared when I slid into the pitcher of ever-pure water. Gingerly crawling out, I leapt to the floor and raced wall to wall like a wet mop. Where I went, stains and soot were purified. Soon the stones sparkled. Lapping up more of the liquid, I hissed it out across the moldy walls. Mildew faded away. All that remained was the mat, with my image imprinted on it. That, I could not bear to clean, so I rolled it up and hid it in a corner.

The filth of a whole year was cleaned in mere moments. The ever-pure water made me clean too. By the time anxious footsteps came on the stair and the door barked open, I sat placidly in the center of Master Belius's massive lab table.

Master Belius stood there, framed in the dark doorway, and glared at me.

He was much changed, young and strong, with bright blue eyes, smooth skin, and a shock of black hair. He wore clean white robes and carried a slender silver staff—quite a contrast to the gnarled branch he used to wield. All in all, he looked like a different person, suited for royal ballrooms instead of old, dark—albeit clean—laboratories. Still, I knew it was him. I recognized the murderous fury in his bulging eyes.

I blissfully stretched.

Belius's gaze shifted from me to the clean tabletop and the orderly specimens ranked behind me. He looked down at the floor, mopped to an impressive shine, and then up to the rafters, cleaned as well. Anger became confusion. He blinked, scratching his head.

Like a man testing ice, Belius set the tip of his staff on the clean floor and shoved a little. His feet tentatively followed the staff out. He picked his way carefully across the room.

"What sort of strange phantasm are you!"

"Hello, Tom," he said softly, creeping toward me with one hand outstretched. "What sort of strange phantasm are you?"

I rose and meowed through a purr, arching my back for him to stroke.

He did not. I should have expected it. Master Belius was, after all, a murderer. In vicelike fingers, he grabbed the scruff of my neck and hoisted me into the air. People who say that doesn't hurt are idiots. I was strangling, hanging there, my feet kicking uselessly beneath me.

"No phantasm at all, but a flesh and blood beast," he said, studying me. His eyes narrowed suspiciously. "A familiar, perhaps? A laboratory help-mate? A tidy cat for an untidy sorcerer? Maybe, but you might also be a rival in disguise, here to steal my secrets." He strode to the window and shoved me out of it, dangling there. "There is one way to see. Aren't cats always supposed to land on their feet?"

Still in his grip, I spun desperately, trying to get a claw on the windowsill.

The bastard flung me away.

I shrieked. Air whirled around me. Ears over tail, I toppled. There wasn't a damned scrap of thatch for miles, not a haystack, not a moat, just a couple inches of grass over loamy ground. My tail spun like a maple seed, and I leveled out. My legs stretched down beneath me, and my backbone arched—springs to cushion my landing. Still, it was six stories down, enough to wound if not kill.

I landed with a thud. My forelegs shattered. The ground wasn't through with me. I rolled over half a dozen times before I lay there, broken and still.

All Too Familiar

The wind was knocked out of me, and my legs were in agony. I struggled to rise but couldn't. I cursed my cockiness. I'd been sure Belius would take me as a familiar, allow me near enough to exact a perfect revenge. Instead, he only killed me once more.

Master Belius's boots drummed the ground rapidly as he approached. I expected more hands on my throat, this time to wring my neck. Instead, Master Belius lifted me gently, almost cradling me in his arms. "I thought you a sorcerous spy, Tom. I had to test you. But you are only a cat—a smart, beautiful, clean cat. It is only fitting that a mage of my standing have so clever, so tidy a familiar." He strode back toward the laboratory, his restless eyes tracing out my broken form. "Fear not, Tom. I have magics to set your legs. Then, there are a few more spots that need cleaning.

Despite the agony in my legs, I knew I had him. I knew I had him.

I was the happiest creature in all Terraloo. Sure, I'd just taken a sixty-foot plunge, broken two legs, endured an inexpert healing session at the hand of a monomaniacal mage, and become the virtual prisoner of a murderer. A human in my position would have been in misery, but cats don't do misery. We do revenge.

A human in my position would have been in misery, but cats don't do misery. We do revenge.

The morning after my fall, I was as good as new. Even the last twinges were gone from my legs. I explored the chamber. Yes, I had known the place as a human, but no adult human really knows anyplace. You have to crawl everywhere you can crawl, lick anything interesting, trace all the smells to their sources, listen to ants trooping across walls, and eat a few spiders before you really know a place. After age eight, most humans are incapable of such explorations. My motives were reasonable—idle curiosity, of course, but also a mental accounting of all the resources available for exacting my revenge.

I perused the countless vials of poison. It would have been an easy thing to put a poisoned tack on Belius's chair and watch him die when next he sat—easy, but not very clever. Next, I checked over the block and tackle in the rafters. Belius used it to move heavy equipment, but I could fashion a noose on one end and attach a counterweight to the hook on the other.... No, too much orchestration. I turned my attention to cleaning and sorting the master's collection of scalpels. A fitting vengeance would include a poke in the eye. Perhaps when he took a nap some afternoon I'd visit him with an ice-pick.... Nah, that wasn't my style. Better to have him kill himself. I moved on to the mineral jars. Many of the labels were loose. A few assiduous swaps—say on the brimstone, charcoal, and nitrate jars—could make for an explosive combination. The problem was that I had to get out alive too....

So many possibilities. There is no happier creature than a cat plotting revenge.

The problem was, night after night, Belius seemed less deserving of retribution. He spent his days at court, in the never-ending cycle of celebrations that was Terraloo government. He had every reason to be happy—young, rich, eternal, free, occupied only with feasts and dances and plays—but he was miserable. His newfound life had lost its luster. Every night, Belius retired, bleary and defeated, to his laboratory. He was glad to have my company—a supposedly sympathetic ear.

"Oh, Tom, you don't know what a bore it is to be immortal," Belius muttered, dropping into a seat near his desk and giving a gusty sigh.

I lifted my head, yawned luxuriantly, and stretched my claws.

Even in his young, smooth face, the master's eyes looked old. They glowered like cracked granite. "You've heard people say, 'care to make it interesting?' Then they put down a bet. Suddenly, any minuscule event becomes interesting. Suddenly it matters which stick reaches the waterfall first, or which icicle drips next, or which side of a die points up. Risk. It's what makes things interesting." He blinked, staring at me. "What risk do I have? None. What interest do I have? None."

I sauntered slowly over toward him, considering his words. He was right. He had nothing to fear, nothing to accomplish, nothing to care about. I had planned to leap up on his lap and get a back rub—even an enemy can give a good back rub—but got distracted by a ladybug. I crouched down, my hind legs working excitedly and my tail twitching.

"I sacrificed everything to gain my immortality."

I frowned. He sacrificed everything?

"I even became a murderer," he confessed heavily. His eyes were haunted. "I killed a kindly young lad, sacrificing his life for my spell. He is in a better place, now, but I am caught in this eternal hell."

He was right about that, as well. My feline life was better than anything I'd had as a human. Once I ran through these nine lives, there'd be another one, and another. Master Belius, meanwhile, was stuck with immortal boredom.

The ladybug took flight. I leapt after her. She cracked her hard little head on the wall and fluttered upward. Ooo, I wanted that bug! Clicking sounds escaped my mouth. My muscles bunched to leap once, and again, and again.

Master Belius watched me and shook his head. "You're a happy thing, aren't you, Tom? Animals are different. You don't need risk. Desire and satiation in endless cycles. That's all you need. You've got that glad, pure, natural ... heart."

The last word came out as a revelation. His long sighs gave way to quick breaths. Granite eyes melted to magma.

I let the ladybug slip away into the rafters and glanced at Master Belius.

His nostrils flared, as if he were a predator smelling the scent of dinner. "If I can steal immortality from another creature, why can't I steal happiness?" He rubbed his hands avidly. "The immortal soul of Corey and the boundless happiness of Tom, all rolled together." He surged up from his chair, reaching for me.

I followed the ladybug to the rafters. It's amazing the vertical leap a cat can make when death is on the line. I'd been through this scene once before with Master Belius, and I wasn't about to let him murder me twice. Hackles high, back arched, eyes and mouth open, I stared down at my master.

"It's all right, Tom," Belius said, lunging again.

I skipped across the beams, stumbling for a moment on the pulley, and escaped to the far edge of the roof.

"Come here, kitty, kitty," he urged, closing and bolting the door. That left only the window—

I scrambled toward it, but Belius was quicker, hurling his lab table up to cover the gap. He braced the heavy wood in place.

I couldn't move that table. I couldn't unbolt that door. The room—I knew all too well—had no other exits.

Master Belius laughed dryly. "That's all right, Tom. You stay up there. I have a few preparations to make, and then I'll just put you to sleep," he said, waving his hand hypnotically before his face.

He was going to cut out my heart, my happy little feline heart, and there was no way to stop him.

He was going to cut out my heart, my happy little feline heart, and there was no way to stop him. In fact, if I didn't calm down immediately, he would probably put me to sleep right away, and that would be the end of it for Tom. Sighing nervously, I crouched down atop a beam, tried to look placid, and thought:

What made me think I could outsmart Master Belius? He was brilliant. I was a cat. That was the problem with humans, too smart to let anybody else live and too righteous to enjoy life themselves. They fooled every other creature into believing they ruled the world, and then fooled themselves into believing it too. The fact was, they ruled nothing at all.

Suddenly, I understood. Belius didn't really control this situation. After all, I was the damn cat!

First, I had to come down out of the rafters. Why should I skulk? This wasn't going to be my death, but Belius's. How could I get revenge if I crouched up there like some vagrant? I landed lightly on the top shelf of the specimen rack. Glass jars chimed.

Belius whirled. Behind him, a fresh-lit brazier glowed evilly. The orange light painted his dark brows in a horrible aspect. His eyes bulged. Feigned affection drew like a tattered veil across his face. "Hello, Tom. Now there's a good cat." His hands tensed, rising to grab me.

Not wanting to begin the chase all over, I snatched up a small bag of brimstone and jumped to the floor. Trotting confidently to the edge of the brazier, I tossed the bag atop the smoldering coals. In a *poof* of smoke, the fire redoubled.

Belius looked gleefully at me. "You want to help? Oh, smart Tom."

He reached up to the block and tackle overhead, grabbed an iron hook, and fastened it around his cauldron's handle. Rope paid through the pulley as he hoisted the cauldron. It swung above gleaming coals. The cauldron settled with a crackling sound atop them. Belius unhooked the rope and stowed it above. He returned to the kettle. His hands moved in a deft pattern over it, as though he were opening folds in the air. In fits and bursts, water fell from his fingers into the cauldron, where it hissed and jumped. Soon, the kettle was half full, and Belius folded back the seams he had opened.

I had been busy, myself. I knew which components Belius commonly used in his elixirs—philters of stoat blood and whale oil, pouches of ground lizard bone and sun-dried chicken eyes, skulls large and small—and I fetched them one-by-one. Since the table had been overturned, I lined up these items on the floor, just out of Belius's reach. It was all part of my ploy. My work would reassure him, put him at ease, and give him plenty of things to be distracted by. Between trips to the component rack, I detoured through the rafters and shifted the block and tackle into the best configuration. I also darted along the lab table that was propped against the window. There was a small niche behind it, not large enough to let me escape, but large enough to serve my purposes.

Soon, the potion in the cauldron had reached a rolling boil. Belius stirred with his new magic staff. Lightning mantled it and sent jabbing fingers of power down into the brew. Over the mixture, Belius muttered ancient and horrible words. Each syllable heightened the elixir's boil. I felt its predatory heat from the rafters, where I dragged at the rope. This concoction was devised to leech the essence from its final component. It would distill that essence into a single, potent drink. Belius intended to hurl me, alive, into that boiling cauldron. Moments later, when I was dead a second time, he would drink down my happiness. Or so he thought.

Steam belched up from the cauldron and fogged the rafters. That made my work only easier. Belius was so avid in his spellcasting, he did not feel the hook slide into place beneath the belt of his robes. Nor did he notice as I looped the other end of the rope around one leg of the upended table.

I let out a shriek of feigned terror and wriggled my way behind the upended table. I couldn't reach the window, of course, but Belius didn't know that. All he knew was that his eternal happiness was about to escape out the window.

With an inarticulate roar, Belius lunged for the table, grasped its edge in his young, strong hands, and hurled it down from the window. The heavy table dropped like a lovely counterweight. The rope around one leg pulled tight. Cord

paid through the pulley in the rafters. The sorcerer—onetime "Master" Belius—was hauled up by his belt to dangle above his own boiling cauldron.

Oh, it was sweet to be the cat on the windowsill in that moment. The masks were gone. It was clear who ruled this situation. Suddenly Belius was neither clever enough nor righteous enough to fool anybody. Instead, he only flailed and kicked impotently, singed by the steam of his own hellish brew.

I sighed a contented sigh, licked my paws, and stretched languidly. This was a familiar moment—all too familiar—except that last time, I was the one who went into the pot. Jumping from the windowsill to the now-level tabletop, I sashayed over to where the rope was looped. All I had to do was tug a little on that frayed end there, and Master Belius would plunge to a boiling death.

All too familiar....

"Please! Please, Tom! Please, help me!" he shouted.

He deserved it, certainly. He was a murderer, after all—almost a double murderer, with me a double victim. He deserved it. But the question was, did I deserve it? If I did this, I'd be a murderer too. His score would be settled, and he'd be reincarnated as a happy hamster somewhere. I'd remain alive, knowing I'd killed a villain only to become one.

I looked down at the rope. One little tug . . .

"Please, Tom! Please!"

I washed my paws of the whole thing and turned tail. This had been revenge enough. Belius would get himself down somehow. He'd survive this night, an eternal and unhappy villain. I, on the other hand, would walk away a glad cat....

As I strutted toward the window, Belius stopped thrashing. Had the steam overcome him? Had he died anyway? I glanced back over my shoulder and glimpsed the last jabbing movements of his hands. He was casting a spell! I leapt for the window, but fingers of magic clutched the scruff of my neck. They dragged me away from the sill, from life, and hauled me back toward the cauldron.

I shrieked—wriggling, riling, clawing—but it was no good. There were no hands to bite, no faces to scratch—only the implacable air. I spun my tail to strike the rope and knock it loose and send my tormentor into the drink, but my touch was feather-light. Gripped in merciless talons of air, I floated across the laboratory and right up in front of Belius's red, leering face.

He laughed angrily. "You should have killed me when you had the chance, Tom! Mercy is for the weak."

I hadn't time to disagree. His magic fist plunged me into the boiling brew.

He laughed angrily. "You should have killed me when you had the chance, Tom! Mercy is for the weak."

It was agony. Blistering heat peeled my flesh from my bones. Worse still was the ravenous hunger that ate away my essence. Worst of all was knowing my glad feline heart would be granted to the man who had murdered me twice.

Bygones. Dogs don't believe in revenge. Dogs believe in running and sniffing and waggling and howling. I'd thought it great to be reincarnated as a cat, and it was, but it's even better to be a dog. Cats just put up with people. Dogs genuinely like them.

I'm a bird dog, small and lean. I get to spend lots of my time tromping through the woods and pointing grouse and pheasant. I can bring a bird back in my mouth without getting a single drop of drool on it. There'll be just the one little blood spot where the quarrel had gone in and the other where it had come out. My master is the best shot in Terraloo and a great guy. Almost a god, so wonderful he is. There's nothing better than getting a pat on the head and a "good dog."

Life gets better and better each time around.

Master Belius, of course, won't get another time around. He's got the curse of immortality. Yes, he survived the night. Yes, he drank the distilled essence of my former, feline being. He thought he was getting happiness out of the deal, and he did, but he also got the unshakable impression that he was a cat.

The king and his court were surprisingly intolerant of their sorcerer's antics. Naked, he would scamper around the castle on all fours, sit on tables and lick himself down, mark his territory in the corners of the throne room, claw the ancestral tapestries to ribbons, hiss and spit at any guards who approached him, climb in people's windows at night and crawl up to sleep between their legs.... The final straw had been the unspeakable things Belius tried to do to the king's tabby, Sophia.

Within a week, Master Belius—the immortal lunatic Master Belius—had been ousted from the castle. He has taken up residence beneath the canal bridge, just where I used to sleep. He thinks himself the king of the world. Of course, he's just a madman, but he's happy—happier than any double murderer deserves to be.

Yes, dogs don't believe in revenge, but we do believe in chasing cats. And cats—or, for that matter, former sorcerers who think they are cats—believe in running from dogs. This is a nice arrangement. Every chance I get, I head down to the canal bridge to nose up my old master and chase him around town.

In his current incarnation, Rob King has published ten novels and produced three beautiful boys. He must have been surprisingly good in his last life.

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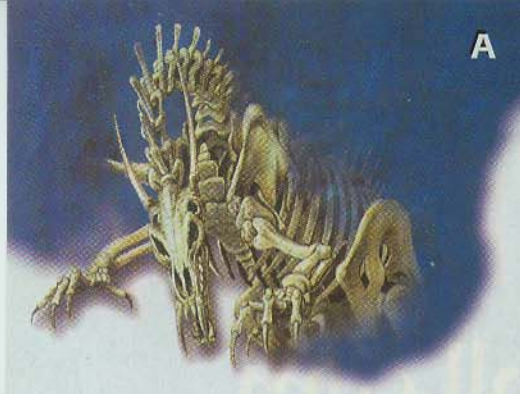

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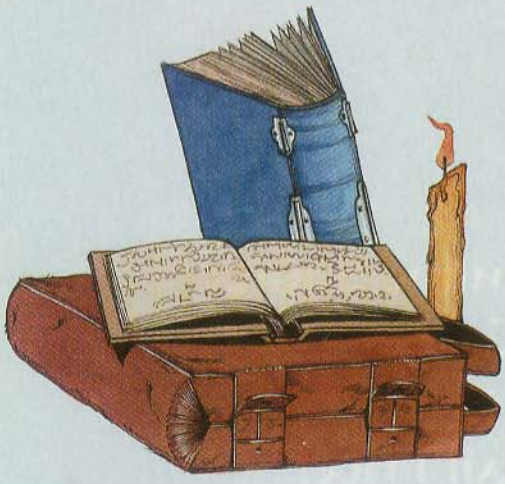


by Robert S. Mullin

illustrated by L.A. Williams

MURQ THE MAGICIAN IS BEST KNOWN FOR HIS role in the adventure outline entitled *Quest of the Mist Golem*, which appeared in the Glossography booklet in the original *World of Greyhawk* boxed set. He also received mention in *The Adventure Begins*. Now we explore the history and spells that made him worthy of notice.

Murq's Magica

The infamous wizard known simply as Murq first appeared in the public eye circa 560 CY, in the City of Greyhawk. History tells us that this was a particularly dark time for the city, for it was then that the noble caste suffered numerous disappearances among their youth. The children vanished mysteriously in the dead of night, never to be seen again.

To add insult to injury, the children were, on occasion, replaced with simulacrums instructed to commit all manner of vile deeds that required their immediate destruction.

The city magistrate, outraged by this atrocity, resolved to locate the culprit and bring him or her to justice. In time, the diligent use of magic and conventional investigation techniques determined that Murq was behind the kidnappings. But when the guardsmen arrived to apprehend the malign wizard, they found that he had already fled for parts unknown. In his stead was yet another simulacrum, this one of Murq himself, and with its dying words, it swore vengeance upon the city and its magistrate—the typical, almost expected oath so commonly uttered throughout history.

A search of Murq's abode offered no insight into his motives for the kidnappings, nor what became of the children (though it was frequently postulated that they had been sacrificed to some nefarious deity). Furthermore, investigators found nothing that could be used to track down the wizard. Indeed, Murq had disappeared without a trace, just as his victims had done.

Despite his apparent foreknowledge that the law was about to close in on him, Murq neglected to take with him an item of particular value to those who practice the arcane arts. Amid a pile of otherwise worthless books and scrolls in Murq's abandoned library, the guardsmen discovered *Murq's Magica*.

Initially, city officials were uncertain about what to do with the tome. Some thought it should be donated to the Guild of Wizardry, while others thought it should be turned over to the noble families who had been victimized by Murq, and that they should determine the book's fate. In the end, however, it was decided that the book would be sold via public auction, thus allowing the government to acquire revenue, yet guarantee that the tome would end up

with an "appropriate" owner, as it was deemed unlikely that anyone could outbid the Wizards' Guild or the nobles. But to everyone's surprise, someone did.

Almost as soon as the bidding began, an unnamed mage stepped forward, a small chest floating behind him. Upon lifting its lid, those present were awestruck, for the chest was nearly overflowing with precious stones of all shapes, sizes, and varieties. In the stunned silence that followed, the mage, knowing his bid could not be matched, snatched up *Murq's Magica*, and with a word and gesture, vanished in a cluster of twinkling lights.

Murq's Magica remained out of sight until 564 CY, when it turned up in Ket, in the possession of a Baklunish merchant named Rahim El'Azat. When asked how he came to own the book, Rahim grinned sheepishly and replied, "I tripped over it while obeying Nature's Call."

Whether or not Rahim's account bears any truth, he did not hold it long, having passed it on a few months later to an Ekbirian sheik in exchange for a pair of breeding camels. Not surprisingly, when the tome passed into the mysterious west, its precise whereabouts evaded historical records in the east.

Indeed, *Murq's Magica* remained in the Baklunish lands for nearly a decade until making its way back to Ket in 583 CY. This time, however, the book was in the possession of an easterner; one Sela Starglimmer, an elven sorceress from the Vesve.

Associates of the lady mage claim that Sela acquired the book while exploring the west and estimate that she owned it for nearly 2 years before returning with it to Ket. Regretfully, this last account cannot be validated, for late in the Greyhawk Wars, Sela was found dead in the backyard of her country home, her body a heap of smoldering ruin, her assailant unknown.

It was only later that investigators discovered that *Murq's Magica* was missing from Sela's library, apparently stolen by her murderer. And while the tome's whereabouts remain unknown as of the present year, frightened whisperings have begun to surface, and they speak one infamous name: Rary the Traitor.

Murq's Mystic Missile

(Evocation)
Level: **2**
Range: **60 yards + 10/level**
Duration: **Instantaneous**
Area of Effect: **One creature**
Components: **V, S**
Casting Time: **2**
Saving Throw: **Special**

Murq's mystic missile is a variant form of *magic missile* and functions in all ways as that spell, except as described below:

- Instead of creating multiple missiles, this spell creates a single missile, regardless of the caster's experience level.
- Unlike a *magic missile*, *Murq's mystic missile* possesses an electrical charge (see below).

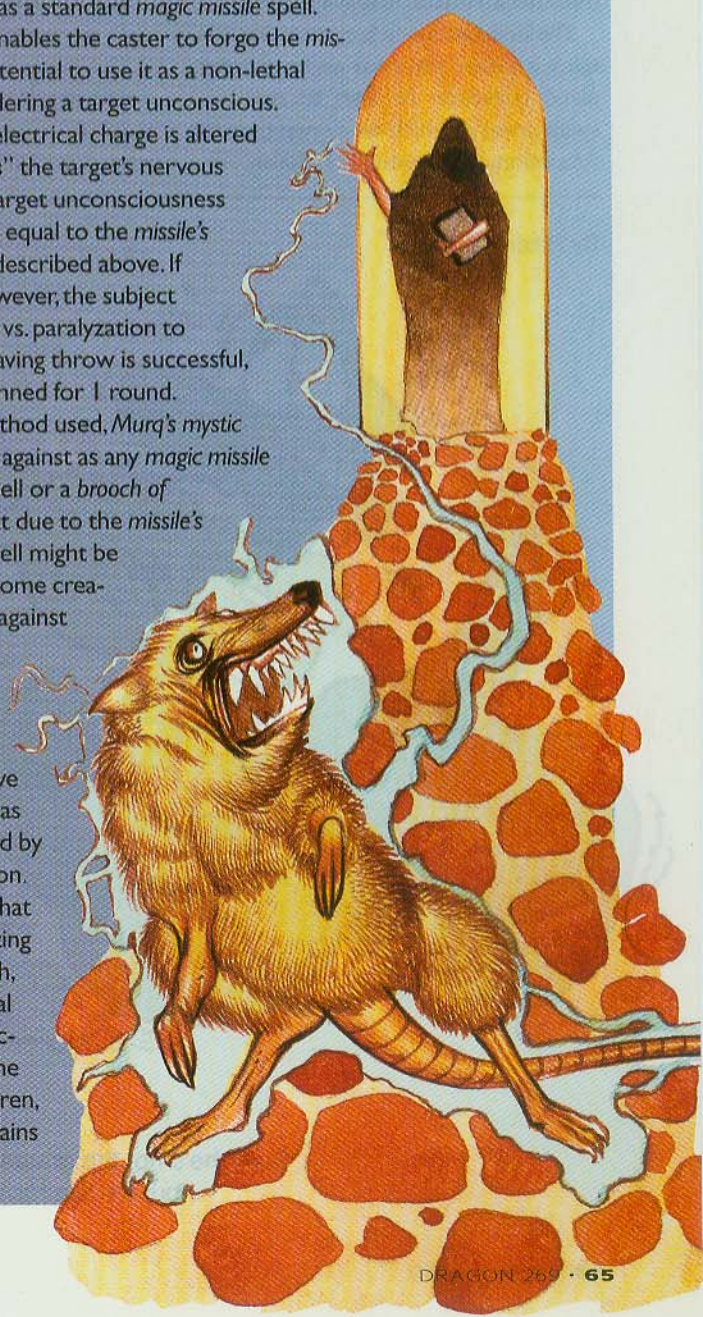
Murq's mystic missile can be used in one of two ways, determined during casting; once selected, the use cannot be changed.

The first method enables the *missile* to be used as a standard *magic missile*. When used this way, the *missile* inflicts 1d4 + 1 points of damage, plus a like amount for every second level of the caster. Thus, *Murq's mystic missile* inflicts 2d4+2 points of damage at 3rd level, 3d4+3 at 5th level, 4d4+4 at 7th, and so forth. Otherwise, it operates as a standard *magic missile* spell.

The second option enables the caster to forgo the *missile's* normal damage potential to use it as a non-lethal weapon capable of rendering a target unconscious. Essentially, the *missile's* electrical charge is altered so that it "short-circuits" the target's nervous system, rendering the target unconsciousness for a number of rounds equal to the *missile's* damage-dice potential described above. If used in this manner, however, the subject receives a saving throw vs. paralyzation to resist the effect. If the saving throw is successful, the target is merely stunned for 1 round.

Regardless of the method used, *Murq's mystic missile* can be defended against as any *magic missile* (for example, a *shield* spell or a *brooch of shielding*). Also note that due to the *missile's* electrical charge, the spell might be more effective against some creatures and less effective against others, based on natural immunities or susceptibility to electrical attacks. Creatures without active nervous systems (such as undead) are not affected by the spell's second version.

A common belief is that when Murq was abducting Greyhawk's noble youth, this spell played a pivotal role, particularly the second version. Without the recovery of those children, however, the truth remains unknown.



Appearance

Measuring 20" × 12" × 2", *Murq's Magica* is rather simple in appearance and construction, its covers and spine consisting of normal leather stretched over wooden planks and fixed in place with brass corner pieces and edging. The book's title is branded into the front cover near the top edge, but the letters possess no further embellishments.

The book's interior is similarly unremarkable, its pages consisting of typical good-quality parchment, the inscriptions thereon lacking any elegance or distinctiveness.

Contents

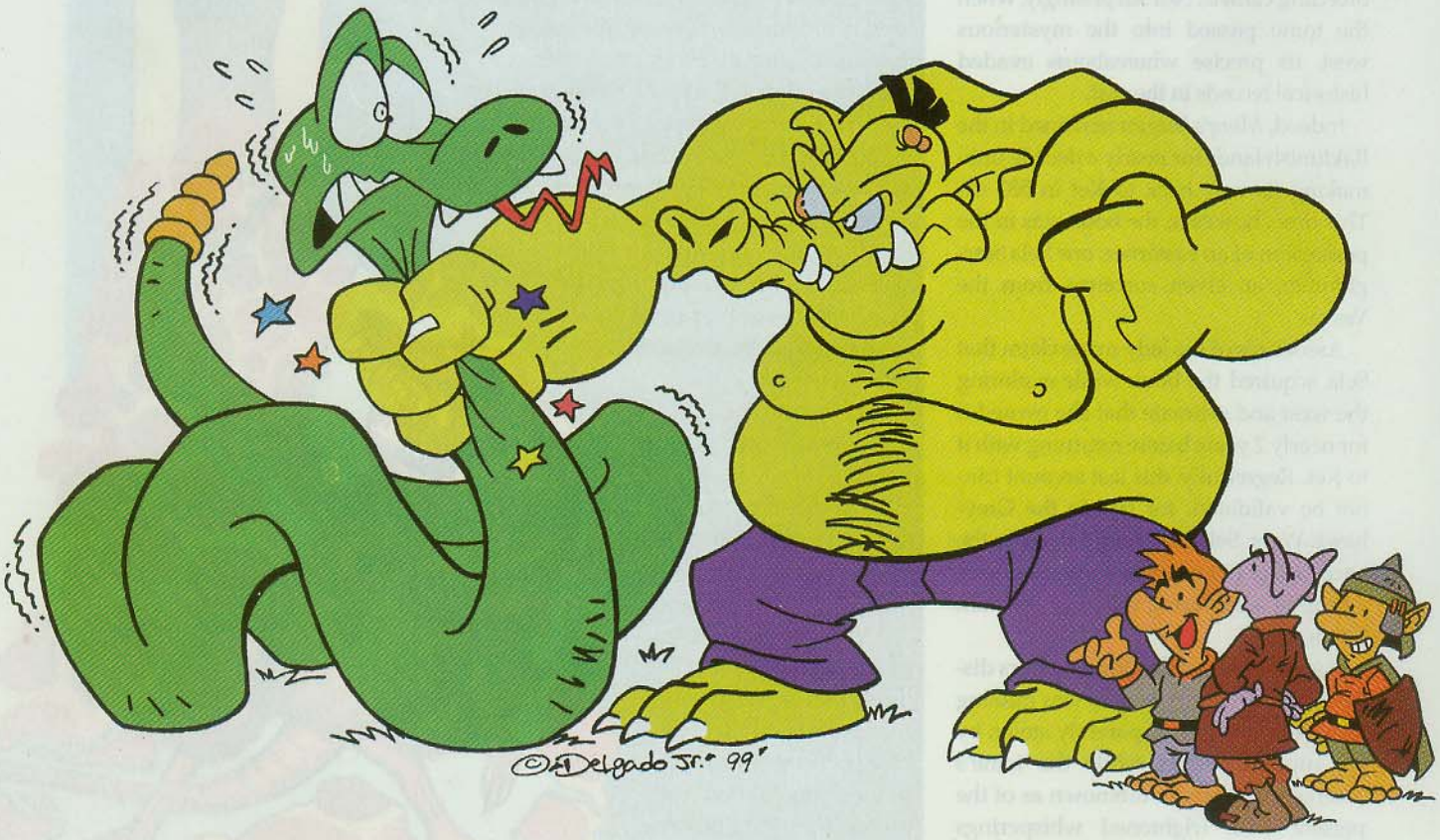
Murq's Magica is known to consist of two distinct sections, one containing spells, the other involving magical theory.

The first and much larger section contains a rather plentiful and well-organized collection of low- to mid-level spells, most of which are drawn from the Alteration, Enchantment/Charm, and Illusion/Phantasm schools. The first page provides an indexed listing of these spells, as follows: *change self, charm person, expeditious retreat* (*Spells & Magic*), *feather fall, hold portal, hypnotism, jump, message, spider climb; alter self, darkness, 15' radius, displace self* (*Spells & Magic*), *forget, invisibility, knock, levitate, misdirection, Murq's mystic missile* (new spell), *wizard lock; delude, fly, haste, hold person, infravision, slow, suggestion, wraithform; confusion, dimension door, emotion, improved invisibility, magic mirror, polymorph other, polymorph self, ultravision* (*Spells & Magic*), *wizard eye; domination, feeblemind, passwall, seeming, shadow door, telekinesis, teleport; eyebite, glassee, Lorloveim's shadowy transformation* (*Tome of Magic*), *mass suggestion, mislead, project image; duo-dimension, phase door, shadow walk, simulacrum, vanish.*

The second section consists of an in-depth study of oneiromancy, the rare magical art involving dreams, sleep, and related topics. It is interesting to note that, according to records in the City of Greyhawk regarding this section of his book, Murq's theories and notes show that he possessed a strong understanding of oneiromancy but had little success in devising new spells within the field. Of course, astute historians know that, in 576 CY, Murq the magician came out of hiding with the intent to take his revenge on the City of Greyhawk and its magistrate, just as his simulacrum had promised 15 years previously. To this end, it is known that Murq, from the safety of his hidden abode in the Cold Marshes, invaded the magistrate's dreams via magical means and transformed those sleep images into nightmares that spoke of doom and destruction. Clearly, Murq made some headway in his oneiromantic studies.

We don't know exactly how Robert does the research for these articles, but we sure would like a look at his library card.

By Peter Delgado



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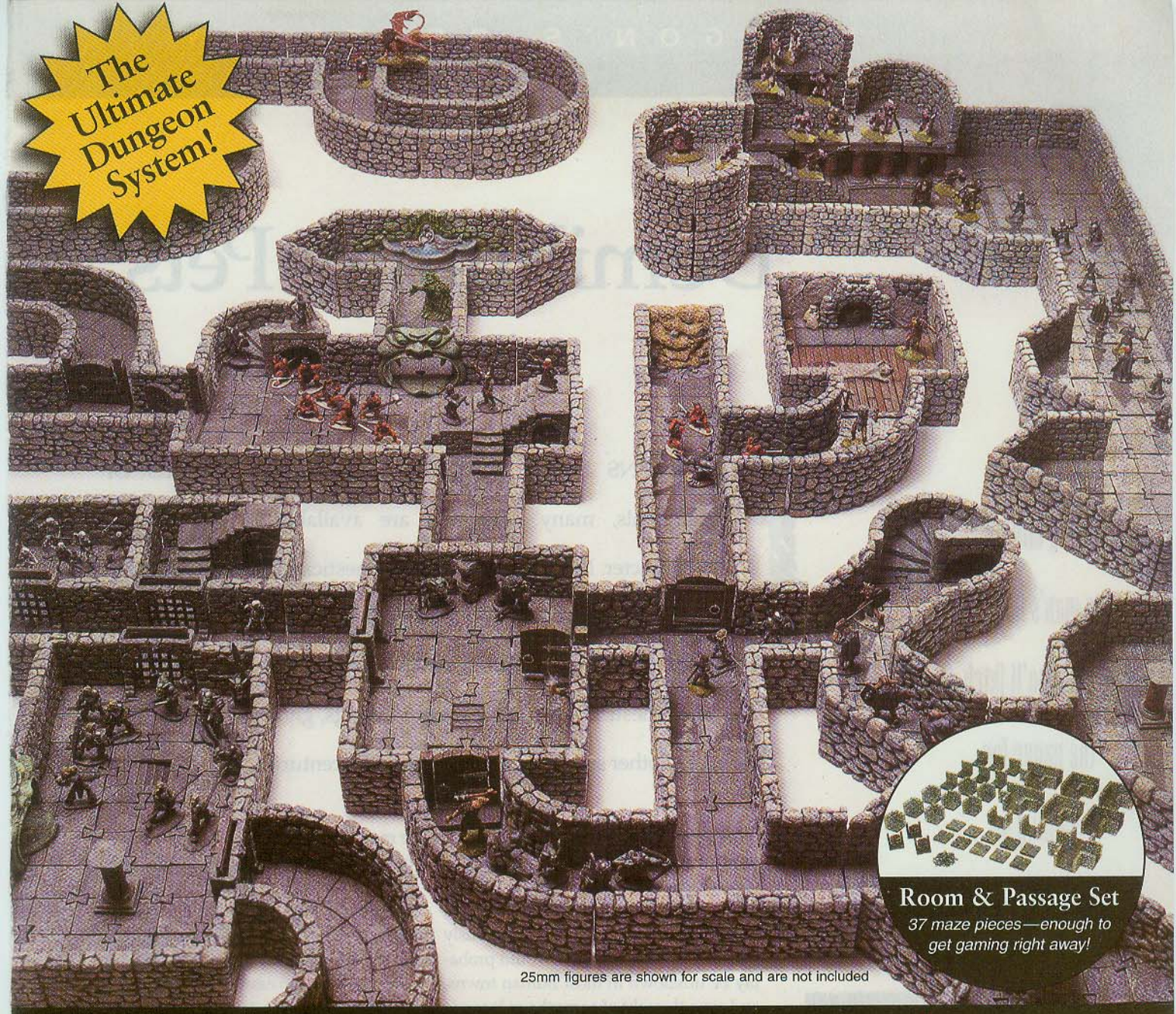

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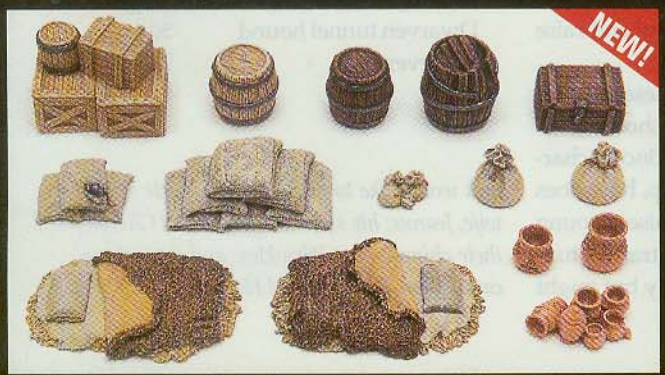

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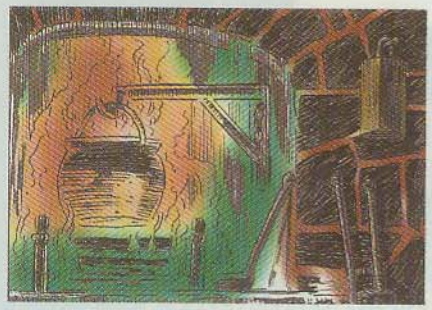


by Jack Pitsker

illustrated by David Day

HUMANS HAVE DOMESTICATED MANY SPECIES OF animals, many of which are available to the average character. More rare are those domesticated by demihumans. What ranger wouldn't be proud to call a cooshie or an elven cat companion? For a while, these were the only examples of demihuman animal domestication, but the elves, halflings, gnomes, and dwarves have bred other special animals through the centuries.

None of the following animals is common, and only the halfling pony even comes close to being as available as any of the beasts domesticated by humans. Even those species that are not jealously guarded by their breeders would probably be unknown in most human towns, and even thought of as myths or legends in some parts. DMs should be careful not to make these creatures too easy to come by. Suppose every character in your campaign wants a dwarven tunnel hound. Once they make the journey to a dwarven town and win the favor of the breeder by slaying a rampaging giant, they might find that only one puppy in the litter isn't already promised to one of the breeder's friends or relatives. Let the group decide who gets to buy and raise the pup.

The care and feeding of these animals is also something the DM should consider as a possible liability. Once a character has a tunnel hound pup, how does she go on adventures and raise a young dog at the same time? An untrained tunnel hound can be a useful ally but might be more trouble than it is worth ... barking at inopportune moments, charging into battle at will, running off to hunt on its own for days at a time. Unless the character is of the same race as the breeders of these animals, nothing about their care should be too easy.

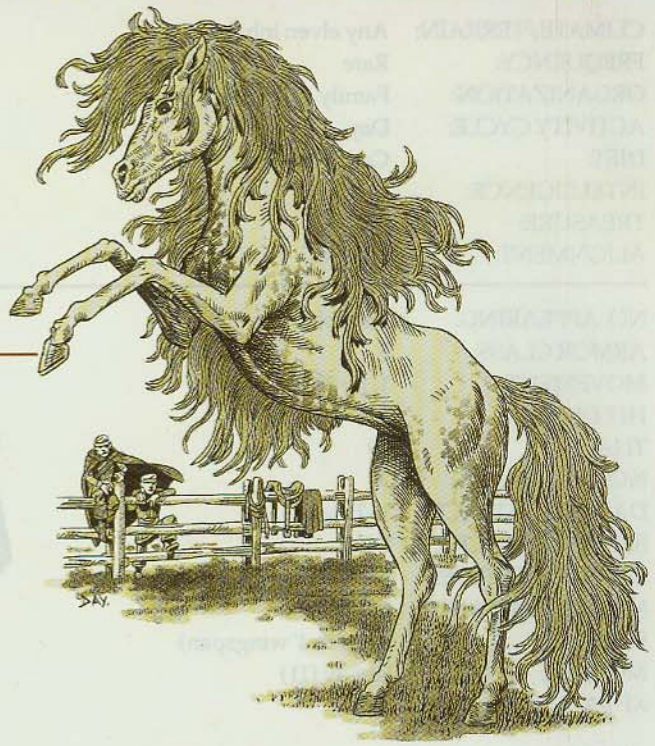
Demihuman Pet Costs

Animal	Cost
Elven riding horse	n/a
Elven war horse	n/a
Elven hawk	5000 gp
Fey deer	20,000 gp
Halfling riding pony	45 gp
Halfling war pony	1000 gp
Rock gnome pocket rat	250 gp
Forest gnome fisher	30 gp
Dwarven tunnel hound	50 gp
Dwarven ox	25 gp

Jack would like to dedicate this article to his wife, Jeanne; his step-kids, Ryan and Cheryl; their chinese pug, Wrinkles; and their three cats, Orion, Artemis, and Harlequin.

Yyllethyn (Elven Horse)

	Riding Horse	War Horse
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Elven inhabited	Elven inhabited
FREQUENCY:	Very rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Herd	Herd
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day	Day
DIET:	Herbivore	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low to average (5–10)	Low to average (5–10)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	Variable	Variable
ARMOR CLASS:	6	6
MOVEMENT:	30	24
HIT DICE:	2	3 + 3
THAC0:	19	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–2/1–2	1–4/1–4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Beauty	Beauty
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	10%	15%
SIZE:	L	L
MORALE:	Steady (12)	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	120	270



Raised by gray elves for millennia, this particular breed of horse has been brought to what many feel is the pinnacle of grace, elegance, and speed. The gray elves call this animal *yyllethyn*, which means "sun follower."

Elven horses are most often white, though some lines are dapple gray, golden, or rarely black. With the exception of the dapple gray, these colors are always uniform, without the common socks, stars, or blazes that mark mundane horses. The elven horse is also slightly longer in the leg, neck and nose than its common cousin, giving it an almost delicate appearance. Its mane and tail are long and flowing, and its hooves are a pale, silvery pink. Their eyes are invariably blue-green.

The elven horse can move through grassland or forest as silently as an elf, even when encumbered by a rider, though any saddle, reins, or barding must be muffled or removed to avoid incidental noise.

Because of their refined bloodlines, elven horses are much more intelligent and more easily trained than other horses. They respond to commands not so much out of training as from personal choice. Rarely is such a horse given to a non-elf, and they would never be sold, nor could they be stolen. The horse-thief would find the animal hostile and aggressive, ready to bolt back to its owners at the first opportunity. If captured and unable to escape, an elven horse sickens and dies within a week.

Combat: The elven warhorse, like the common warhorse, continues to fight independently of its rider. It attacks with its front hooves and fights even if its owner is killed or incapacitated.

Elven horses do not panic at loud noises or fire as easily as mundane horses. Elven riding horses panic only 40% of the time. Elven warhorses do not panic in any circumstances.

Elven horses have also been bred to have a slight resistance to magic. Elven riding horses have a 10% resistance to magic, whereas the elven warhorse has a 15% resistance.

Their extreme, almost ethereal beauty makes it difficult for an intelligent opponent to attack the elven horse. Any opponent of semi- or higher Intelligence must make a saving throw vs. spell when deciding to attack an elven horse. Failure means the opponent just can't muster the wickedness to injure such a beautiful animal. If the elven horse causes any damage to the opponent, however, the charm is broken.

Habitat/Society: Elven horses are longer lived than their mundane relatives. The average pregnancy for an elven mare lasts 13 months, after which a single foal is born. The foal is weaned after 8 months and matures after 5–6 years. The typical life span of the elven horse is anywhere from 60 to 90 years, though some have been rumored to be immortal.

Elven horses form small family groups rather than herds. They mate for life and become melancholy if taken away from their mates. Although they have no language of their own, elven horses understand the languages around which they were raised. These bloodlines are usually bred for elven royalty, their ancestors having served as mounts for some of the most famous elven heroes.

Ecology: Elven horses have been bred from common horse stock over countless eons. They have since become a separate species and cannot interbreed with common horses. They do not exist in the wild and are never used as beasts of burden, other than as mounts or war steeds. They are most commonly found in gray elf communities, though some high elf communities boast the occasional herd, and there have been rumors of a sylvan breed.

Crayghe (Elven Hawk)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any elven inhabited
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (4)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	Variable
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	1, fly 39 (B)
HIT DICE:	1–1
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–2/1–2/1
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Dive
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (up to 4' wingspan)
MORALE:	Steady (11)
XP VALUE:	120

The elven hawk appears similar to the common hawk, although it is slighter and has a smaller wingspan. The elven name, *crayghe*, is a nonsense word designed to imitate the hawk's cry. Elven breeders mixed various bloodlines over the centuries, producing a faster, more intelligent hawk. Because of their intelligence, elven hawks can be trained to perform many tasks that are beyond their mundane cousins. They can even be taught to understand simple sentences or recognize individuals by name. It would not be unheard of for an elven hawk to carry a written message to a specific person or to scout out enemies. There is a legend of a wounded elven ranger who was fed and guarded by his hawk until help arrived.

Like elven horses, these birds are usually found only in the company of elves. Although they are more widespread through the various elven races, they are less likely to stay with a non-elf, even if raised from a chick. Unless its owner is elven, there is only a 50% chance that an elven hawk will bond with its new owner, 65% if the owner speaks some sort of elven language. If no bond is formed, the hawk flies away at the earliest opportunity. Unlike the elven horse, an elven hawk can be purchased, though with a warning to non-elves of their tendency to flee. Most falconers are willing to take the risk, considering the potential benefits if the bird successfully bonds.

Combat: Like most hawks, the elven hawk begins combat by using a diving attack. It receives a +2 attack bonus on the dive and inflicts double damage with its talons. It cannot use its beak during the diving round. After the first round, the elven hawk claws and pecks, targeting its opponent's eyes. It has a 35% chance of striking an eye, blinding its prey for 1d10 rounds, with a 15% chance of the opponent losing the eye. When attacking with the its beak, the elven hawk automatically damages an eye on a natural 20.

The elven hawk's eyesight and hearing are superb. It is surprised only on a roll of 1 on 1d20 and always warns its owner if it hears or spots someone or something approaching.

The elven hawk is claustrophobic and does not enter a building or enclosed space willingly. If forced indoors, it shrieks, even if hooded, until taken back outside. This noise could attract unwelcome attention or wandering monsters.

Habitat/Society: Elven hawks do not usually stray from their elven masters, so one rarely finds a feral hawk. They can survive anywhere there are rodents, fish, or small reptiles.

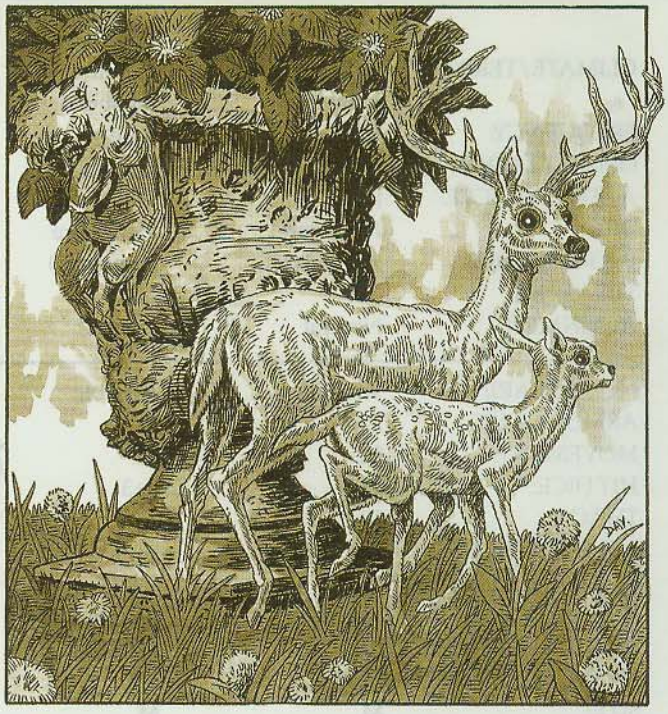
The elven hawk mates for life and never chooses to be separated from its mate for any long period. If the bird is kept from its mate for more than a month, it becomes listless and unresponsive. In extreme cases, it might become aggressive, attempting to flee back to its mate. Many elves have surrendered their hawks to other falconers to keep a mated pair together, with the understanding that the first clutch of fledglings will be given as compensation.

Female elven hawks are capable of producing only two or three clutches of eggs (2–5 eggs/clutch) during their entire lifetime. The birds begin to fly within 2 months and become full adults within a year. Elven hawk fledglings sell for about 2,000 gp, whereas a fully trained adult can cost up to 5,000 gp.

Ecology: Elven hawks are a domesticated species bred by the elves for thousands of years. Elven rangers have often warned that if this species should run wild, it would drive slower and less intelligent hawk species to extinction. This is the reason that the elven hawk was bred to have such a strong bond with its owner and to produce young so rarely. By keeping elven hawks numbers low and in inhabited areas, the wild hawk species are protected.

Byut (Fey Deer)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any elven inhabited
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Herd
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	Variable
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	1
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Camouflage, musk
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (1' tall)
MORALE:	Unreliable (3)
XP VALUE:	35



The fey deer was a favorite elven pet in centuries past, but their numbers have dwindled. Now they are found only in the houses of elven royalty or the very wealthy. Their name, *byut*, is an old elven term of endearment usually reserved for mischievous children. Bred for their diminutive size and gentle nature, this animal resembles its larger cousins in many respects. The adult male fey deer has a full rack of antlers that can reach a spread of up to 6 inches across. Its hooves are softer than those of the mundane deer, having a spongy texture, and its eyes are unusually large.

Its most striking feature, however, is made obvious when the animal is frightened. Its normally light gray coat changes color to blend in with its surroundings. When thus concealed, the fey deer is impossible to spot in natural surroundings and has a 90% chance of blending in with any other type of setting, even in bright light.

Combat: The fey deer avoids combat at all costs, fleeing if possible, vanishing if necessary. If discovered and cornered, male fey deer can attack with their antlers for 1–2 points of damage. The fey deer can also release a strong musk, usually used in mating, from glands in its neck. This musk is inhaled by any breathing creature within a 6-foot radius. Anyone inhaling this sweet musk must make a saving throw vs. poison or stand entranced in a euphoric state for 1–6 rounds. The fey deer always uses the time gained by this maneuver to escape its enraptured foe.

Habitat/Society: The fey deer is a domesticated animal. No members of the species exist in the wild, and their numbers are few. There are rumors that secluded gray elven communities have secret glades that house small herds of these precious animals, but this information has never been verified.

Female fey deer can give birth to one or two fawns every three years in the spring. Given their delicate nature, however, birthing becomes more dangerous for older females. Because of the high risk involved, elves rarely breed fey deer past the age of ten, and the average doe will give birth to only 3–4 fawns in her lifetime. The typical life span of a fey deer is only twenty years, though some owners use spells and potions to prolong their adored pet's life as long as possible.

Ecology: The fey deer was bred to live in the main hall or garden of elven owners, and there are few who would doubt that in the wild, despite its camouflage ability, this species would die out completely. There have been a number of attempts to reintroduce the species into the wild, though these have universally met with dismal failure. Even under the best circumstances, these pampered animals are not sturdy enough to live long in the wild, and the herds are gradually whittled down by disease and accidental death. Most elven communities have given this up as a lost cause, though the rumors of hidden herds still circulate.

Another rumor is that long ago an elven ranger dedicated his life to reintroducing the fey deer into the wild and was successful. If this is true, there may be a herd of feral fey deer living quietly somewhere in a verdant forest. Most elves scoff at this notion, although even the most ardent skeptic admits that the animal's natural camouflage makes this rumor difficult to dismiss completely. There has even been the occasional "feral fey deer" sighting. Though this is usually a case of mistaken identity or an outright fabrication, there are some reports that have never been verified one way or another. Those who dedicate their lives to chasing down these elusive phantoms have so far met with frustration.

Hair combed from fey deer can be woven to help make *cloaks of elvenkind*.

Pennig (Halfling Pony)

	Riding Pony	War Pony
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Halfling inhabited	Halfling inhabited
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Herd	Herd
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day	Day
DIET:	Herbivore	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	Variable	Variable
ARMOR CLASS:	7	7
MOVEMENT:	12	12
HIT DICE:	2+2	3+3
THAC0:	19	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–2	1–4/1–4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil	Rear kick (2–8)
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M	M
MORALE:	Average (10)	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	35	65

The halfling pony is famous for its tenacity and toughness. The breed is said to come from wild mountain stock, which accounts for its endurance and sure-footedness. The halfling breed is also much more affable than its wild ancestors and more at home in the rolling hills and open plains. Their halfling name, *pennig*, is simply the halfling word for pony.

Halfling ponies come in various colors, although the majority are a warm chestnut brown. Their coats are shaggy and need frequent brushing to look their best. In harsh conditions, however, their shaggy coats provide excellent protection against the elements. Their mane and tail are quite long, and their forelocks spread out over their foreheads, concealing their eyes. Halflings never trim their ponies, allowing the mane and tail to grow to the ground, though these are often braided.

Halfling ponies make superb mounts, as they are hard workers and unlikely to bolt in the face of danger, sometimes to their detriment. Some critics of the pennig say that they are too stupid to be afraid, although halflings claim that the pony's loyalty and bravery are the reasons.

Combat: The halfling pony attacks with a bite or by slashing with its hooves; either attack inflicts 1–2 points of damage. Riding ponies are not trained to attack while carrying a load.

The halfling war pony is a much more dangerous animal, with two hoof attacks against opponents at its front, each inflicting 1–4 points of damage. Any enemy unlucky enough to be facing the war pony's posterior might find himself or herself on the receiving end of a nasty kick. Using both hind legs, the war pony gains a +2 bonus to hit and causes 2–8 points of damage. The war pony can use either the front hooves or hind hooves in any round, but never both in the same round.

Habitat/Society: Although it was originally bred from wild mountain pony stock, the halfling pony is normally found in rolling hills or grasslands. There are occasional feral herds that can be captured and broken, but most halfling ponies are found in towns and cities. Halfling war ponies are harder to find, however, as the breed's agreeable nature makes them difficult to train for combat. Halfling ponies are usually trained as war ponies by special order through halfling breeders. This takes at least 2 years, as combat training starts when the pony is a foal. This is rarely undertaken simply to sell the pony on the open market, and few adventurers who have invested the time and money into acquiring one of these mounts would be willing to part with it for any price. Only in a large city stable would one have a chance of finding a halfling war pony for sale, and its cost is typically twice that of a normal war pony. Such ponies usually come up for sale only if their original owner dies, and it's a rare war pony that doesn't die with its owner.

Halfling ponies live about as long as their mundane cousins, and their birth rates and gestation periods are about the same. The one main difference is that hard work does not seem to lessen their lifespan by any appreciable amount, or even tire them much. The halfling pony is capable of carrying more weight than the average pony. It can move at full speed while carrying 180 lbs., half speed at 265 lbs., and one-third speed under a burden of 350 lbs.

Ecology: Because of its nimble-footed ancestry, the halfling pony can move over mountainous terrain or narrow bridges that might hamper other ponies or horses. They are also quite willing to follow their owners into dungeons or caverns, being used to the underground homes of their halfling breeders.

Twill (Pocket Rat)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Gnome tunnels
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5)
TREASURE:	Q
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic good
NO. APPEARING:	Variable
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	½
THAC0:	20
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1 (bite) or by weapon
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Invisibility to infravision
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	30%
SIZE:	T (6" long)
MORALE:	Average (9)
XP VALUE:	35

The rock gnome pocket rat is not actually a rat, or even a rodent. It is a small burrowing marsupial that was bred as a pet by rock gnomes. It is called a "pocket rat" because it resembles a hooded rat in many ways, although its eyes are much larger. The original gnomish name comes from the term used for an apprentice gem miner. With its opposable thumbs and high intelligence, the pocket rat can be a useful friend, the female especially because of her marsupial pouch or "pocket." They are easily trained, grasping the concepts of tool use and language. Most adult pocket rats understand gnomish, though they can't speak it themselves. It is not unusual for their owners to fashion small tools or weapons for them to use.

The pocket rat also has a remarkable sense of smell and a talent for sniffing out precious minerals. It has a 60% chance of detecting precious minerals within a 30' radius, which makes it a favorite pet for the gnomish miner. Most pocket rats have a few gems stashed away somewhere; females use their pockets to store such treasures.

The pocket rat is at home in the absolute darkness of subterranean tunnels and cannot tolerate bright light, which hurts its eyes. Its activity cycle can match its owner's underground, but outdoors the pocket rat remains nocturnal.

The pocket rat also has the magical ability to conceal its body heat, becoming invisible to infravision. It can do this at will and can maintain it indefinitely as long as it is not moving quickly. If it moves at more than half its normal speed, however, its body temperature breaks through the magical concealment and it is detectable again. It must stop before it can become invisible to infravision once more.

Combat: Pocket rats are not the greatest fighters. With their relatively few hit points and tiny bites, they are more likely to flee into the dark shadows of the tunnels and hide than fight. If cornered or defending their young, they fight with their large incisors or perhaps tiny weapons. Gnomes delight in making such miniature weapons for their pets. These can include daggers (Dmg 1–2/1), swords (Dmg 1–3/1–2), and bows and arrows (Dmg 1/1). Pocket rats do not feel comfortable in armor, but the males sometimes wear a leather pouch in imitation of the females.

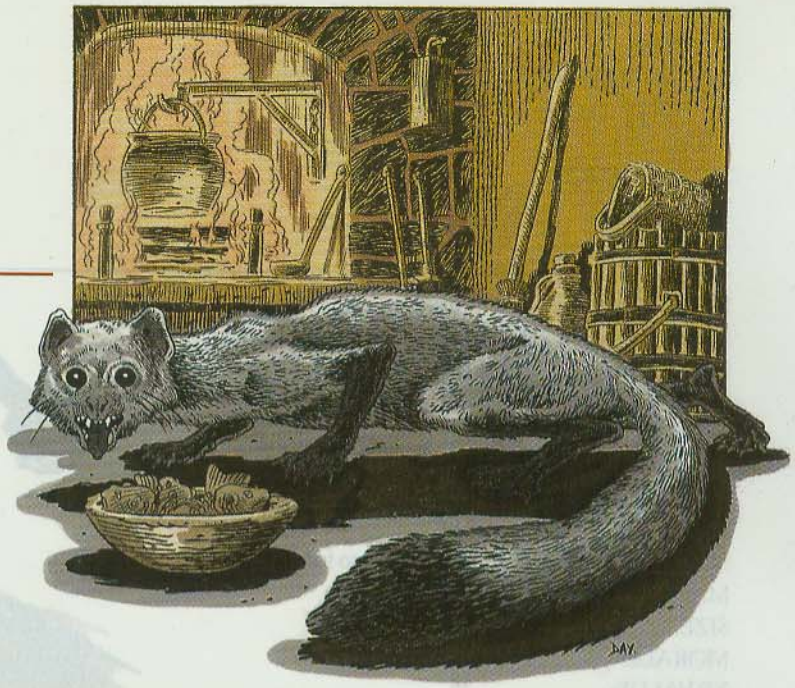
Habitat/Society: The pocket rat is a solitary animal that enjoys spending time with its owner or roaming the tunnels in search of insects and mushrooms to munch. It usually makes its home in a soft earth burrow, but many gnomes enjoy making elaborate houses for their pets with tunnels and wheels in which they can roam and play.

Males and females mate at various times throughout the year, but do not stay together. Gestation lasts for 2–3 weeks, at which time a barely developed young rat makes the journey up its mother's furry belly and into her pouch. The young stay in the pouch for 10 weeks and are in and out of the pouch for another full year. A female pocket rat might have two or three young at different stages of development sharing the same pouch. Needless to say, these particular females find somewhere else to stash their gems. The pocket rat is considered an adult after 2 years and can live as long as 12–15 years.

Ecology: The pocket rat was bred (some say engineered) from a common cave marsupial of the same name. The wild breed is unintelligent, however, and lacks the opposable thumbs and body heat disguising ability of its gnomish cousin. The wild pocket rat hoards gems and precious metals, however, and gnomes are always on the lookout for their burrows.

Stoght (Forest Gnome Fisher)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any forest
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (3)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	Variable
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	18
HIT DICE:	1+1
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	See below
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–4 (1d3+1)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Musk
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Saves as 4th-level fighter
SIZE:	S (3' long)
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	35



The forest gnome fisher is a domesticated version of the animal of the same name. The forest gnome name, *stoght*, sounds more like a cough than a word and means "guardian" or "warrior." The fisher, is a member of the weasel family and has been bred by forest gnomes for its fierceness and loyalty.

The fisher looks like a large ferret or small fox and can measure up to 3 feet long, one third of which is its bushy tail. No one knows how it earned its name, as fish play only a small role in its diet. It has the short legs and slender body of the weasel clan, and its silky, sleek fur can range from gray or dark brown to almost black. The feet and tail tip are always black, and some areas are peppered with white-tipped hairs that give the animal a frosty look. Its fur is much valued by trappers, and forest gnomes play a large part in keeping these animals from being hunted to extinction.

Fishers are remarkably quick and agile, and the kind bred by forest gnomes are clever as well. Their senses are keen, so they are rarely caught by surprise (roll of 1 on 1d10). Fishers are also as comfortable in the trees as on the ground, where, with their high agility and ability to make tremendous leaps (up to 18 feet), they can travel as quickly as they do on land. Stoghts are also strong swimmers. Young forest gnomes sometimes take turns riding on the family fisher, but adult gnomes are much too big for that activity.

Combat: As a fighter the fisher is impressive. Reports of fishers defending forest gnome families against all sorts of large creatures are not exaggerated. Natural animals, even those much larger than the fisher, are frightened by its ferocity. The fisher snarls and hisses, arching its back and stamping its feet. Faced by this display, any natural animal must make an immediate morale check at a –2 penalty. Failure means that the animal is intimidated and chooses to flee.

The fisher's tremendous speed in combat makes it difficult to hit, and its high Dexterity gives it a –2 modifier to its initiative rolls. Although it has only a bite attack, a stoght can attack twice per round. If the situation requires, the fisher can also use its musk. The fisher rolls to hit, ignoring armor; if successful, the target must make a saving throw vs. poison or be incapacitated for 1–4 rounds. The fisher usually uses this time to renew its attacks with added ferocity.

If defending its young or a forest gnome family, the fisher fights to the death.

Habitat/Society: The fisher is a solitary animal, though some forest gnome families keep more than one as pets or guards. It lives in most forests, although the animal is quite rare, especially the wild variety. It prefers the coniferous forests that grow at high altitudes, but it also likes lowland deciduous forests, as long as they are dense.

A stoght's diet consists of rabbits, rats, weasels, birds, mice, raccoons, fish, and the occasional nuts and berries. It also eats carrion, either stored or a dead animal it has happened upon. A fisher especially loves to eat porcupine, which it flips over on its back, attacking the soft underbelly. Forest gnomes usually let their fishers hunt for their own meals.

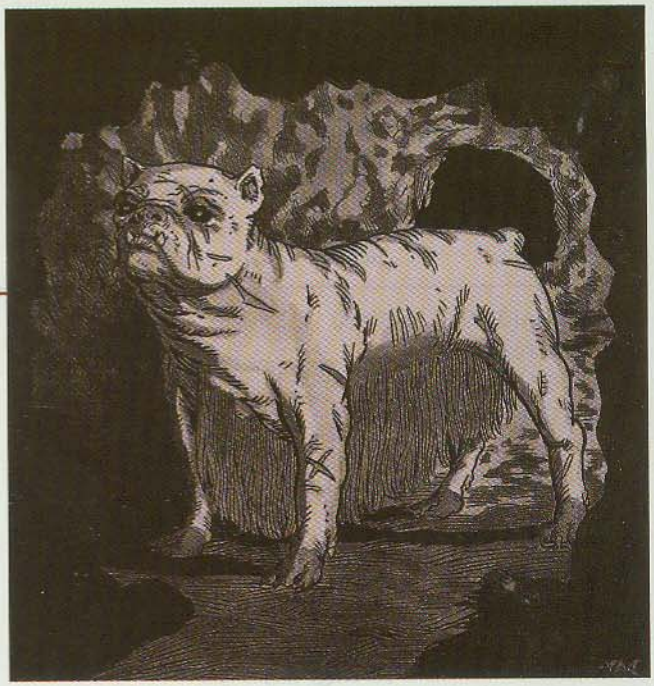
The gestation period is actually delayed after mating, and the stoght cubs don't appear for a full year. The litter ranges from one to five cubs. They are weaned at 7 weeks, hunting at 3 months, and on their own at 6 months.

Ecology: The fisher is a rare animal, and if not for the forest gnomes would be rarer still. It is prized for its fur, the female more than the male, although her pelt is nearly half the size. Any trapper foolish enough to kill a fisher, however, runs the risk that a vengeful forest gnome will be laying for the trapper the next time he or she enters the forest.

Brak Twan (Dwarven Tunnel Hound)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any dwarven inhabited
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2–4)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	Variable
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	3+3
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Rending, throat attack
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	+2 to saving throws vs. spell
SIZE:	M (4'–5' long)
MORALE:	Steady (12)
XP VALUE:	120



The dwarven tunnel hound, or *brak twan*, is an ugly dog by anyone's standards. It has a flat, box-shaped head, short ears, black eyes, and a broad chest. Its skin is pink and hairless all over its body, except for its belly where silky, gray hair grows almost to the ground. Its skin is tough and leathery. Dwarves use the tunnel hound mainly as a guard or for hunting, so its skin is usually criss-crossed with battle scars. Some dwarves have their dog tattooed or paint its skin with runes and patterns. Some dwarves match their dog's tattoos to their own. Dwarven battleragers in particular tend to have a certain fondness for these ugly, scarred animals.

This dog is fiercely loyal to its owner and favors dwarves over all other races. However, it can also form a strong bond with gnomes, and it tolerates humans and halflings. The tunnel hound is always suspicious of half-elves and elves, and it never obeys them as masters. If orcs, goblins, or their kin are upwind within 100 yards, or anywhere within 20 yards, a tunnel hound detects them by scent and leaps to its feet, snarling and ready to fight. Otherwise, its sense of smell is not as acute as that of a normal dog.

What it lacks in that sense, it makes up for in others. Bred and raised in dark tunnels, it has developed keen eyesight (60' infravision), and it also has keen hearing. Because of this, a brak twan receives a +2 bonus to its surprise rolls.

Combat: The tunnel hound's tough skin, sturdy body, and massive jaws make for a fearsome opponent. When a tunnel hound hits with a roll four or greater over the number needed, it keeps its jaws clamped on the victim. Each round following, the hound hits automatically, rending its foe for another 2–12 points of damage. The victim must make a successful Open Doors check to pry open the dog's jaws. On a natural 20 to hit, the dog clamps its jaws on its enemy's throat (assuming it has a throat), crushing the victim's windpipe and choking its victim to death in 3 rounds. This special choking attack might not work against very large opponents at the DM's discretion.

The tunnel hound has also picked up some of its master's resistance to magic, gaining a +2 to saving throws vs. spell.

Habitat/Society: Tunnel hounds are bred and raised by hill, mountain, and deep dwarves, and there have been some reports of gray dwarven raiding parties that use tunnel hounds as attack dogs. Dwarven kennel owners believe that the tunnel hound was created by the Maker along with the first dwarves, but common thought is that the breed evolved from a prehistoric mastiff thousands of years ago.

A litter can produce anywhere from 3–10 puppies. They require little or no training to be useful as guard or war dogs, as battle (not to mention a protective disposition) seems to come naturally to them. A tunnel hound is full grown and combat ready at around the age of 1 to 2 years. They rarely live past the age of fifteen.

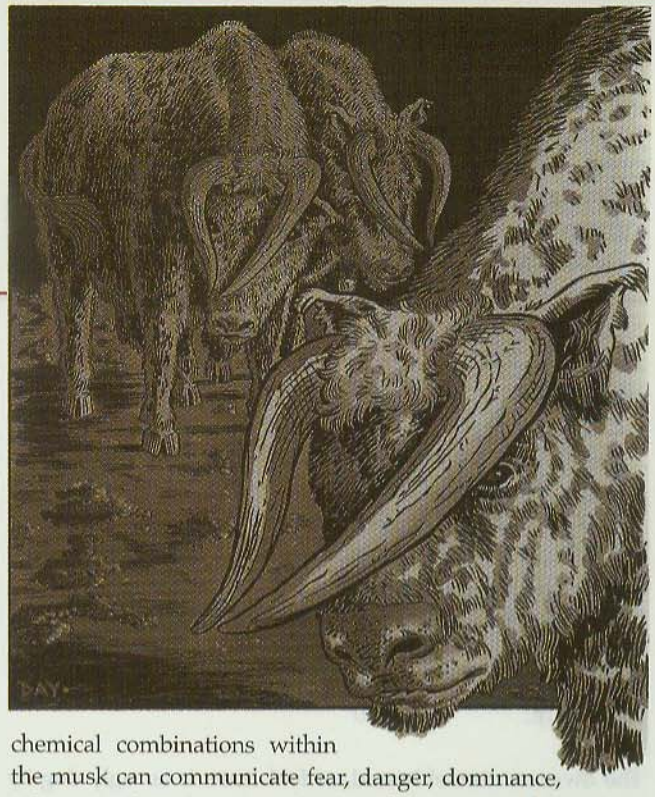
Dwarven breeders will gladly sell available tunnel hound pups or adults to any they think deserving of such a loyal animal. These dogs seem to have a certain pride when it comes to combat, and if a potential victim seems nonthreatening or submissive, the dog usually does not attack unless so commanded by its owner. The only exception to this is in combat with goblins, orcs, and their horrid kin.

Ecology: The tunnel hound is a domesticated animal and has little impact on its environment, other than keeping the dwarven tunnels free of rats, kobolds, goblins, and such. Packs of feral tunnel hounds have been encountered from time to time, roaming deserted dwarven mines or ancient halls. These wild dogs can be a menace to nondwarven explorers, though a dwarf can usually shoo them away or capture them for redomestication.

Guttar (Dwarven Ox)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any dwarven inhabited
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Herd
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Variable
DIET:	Herbivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	20–60
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	4
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–10
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Charge or stampede
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (8' long, 5' high at shoulder)
MORALE:	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	175



Dwarven oxen are bred to live in the underground tunnels or halls that the dwarves call home. Their dwarven name means "thunder" because of the rumbling echoes the herds make as they move through the dwarven tunnels. They have short, coarse hair and large, rugged bodies. Both males and females have horns that curve forward over their noses and come together in the front, a formation bred into them to avoid snagging the horns on narrow tunnel walls.

Combat: In melee, the dwarven ox slashes or butts with its horns, causing 1–10 points of damage. If charging from a distance of at least 40 feet, it can cause 2–12 points of impaling damage plus 1–6 points of trampling damage. If a large herd of oxen are frightened, they might stampede, and woe betide whoever stands in their way. Anyone unable to avoid the stampede is hit by the first ox as in a charge (2–16 + 1–4 points of damage), and then trampled by 2–8 of the rest of the herd, causing 1–6 points of damage each. A well-known battle tactic of dwarves is to stampede a herd of oxen through a tunnel full of orcs or goblins, then saunter in to clean up whatever remains, which usually isn't much.

Habitat/Society: Dwarven oxen have been bred to live in the subterranean halls and tunnels of their dwarven masters. They shy away from bright sunlight and do not willingly venture outside into broad daylight, although light from a torch or fire does not bother them at all. Their eyesight is limited to a weak form of infravision (30 feet), and they rely mostly on their keen sense of smell to find their food.

Their sense of smell is also important in communication within the herd. Because echoes in the dwarven tunnels can be deceiving, the dwarven ox uses a musk to relay emotional states rather than vocalization. Depending on the situation, different chemical combinations within the musk can communicate fear, danger, dominance, calm, or a desire to mate. Dwarves have learned how to use extracted versions of this musk to help control their herds.

Dwarven oxen graze on subterranean fungi and plant life, even those usually hazardous to other animals, and are immune to most of their attacks. There is a 95% chance that any special attack by a subterranean fungus or plant has no effect on a dwarven ox, which then happily munches it up.

Herd size varies depending on available grazing. Herds can be as small as ten animals, whereas some of the larger dwarven halls boast herds numbering hundreds. Conflicts over grazing rights have even started wars between neighboring dwarven settlements. Some non-dwarven villages have awakened to find their hills stripped bare of fodder.

Ecology: Dwarven oxen provide dwarves with meat and milk. Their coarse hair can be used to make rope or rough cloth, and their hide makes a tough leather, good for metal-working aprons, gloves, or leather armor. Delicate carvings are often made from the horn of the dwarven ox and given as tokens of love or friendship. Ox horn is also a popular choice of materials for use as hilts for forged weapons and is commonly found in dwarven smithies. The manure of the dwarven ox is also dried and used as fuel for forges or hearth fires. The dwarves believe strongly in using every part of the ox. Even the hooves are boiled for glue or used as chew toys for tunnel hound pups.

Dwarven oxen are also used as beasts of burden, carrying supplies, pulling mining carts, or turning the gears for some large contraption like a mill or mining lift. Sometimes they are even used as mounts by more eccentric dwarves like battleragers, though they are too stupid to serve as war mounts. However, just the sight of a battlerager mounted on a dwarven ox has sent units of goblins fleeing for their lives.

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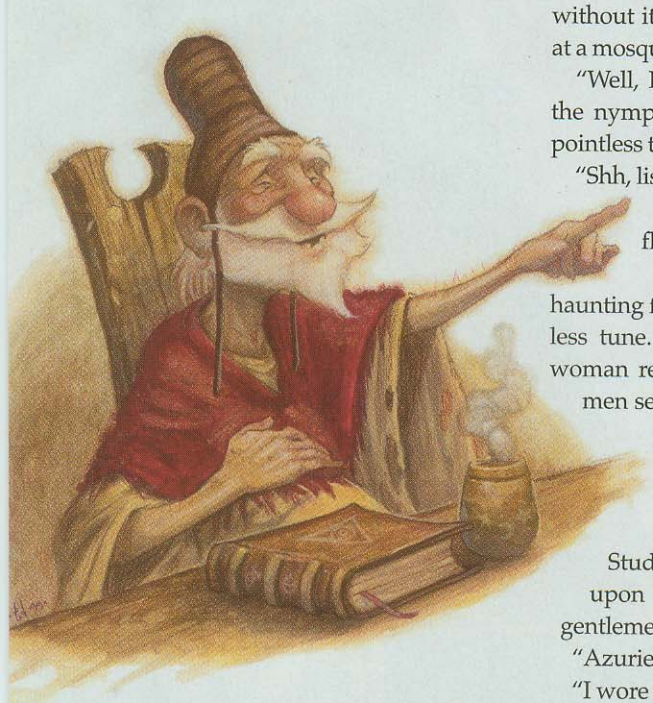
THE ECOLOGY OF THE PSEUDODRAGON

The Sting

"Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice . . . "



"Well," said Buntleby, "I guess this meeting of the, what?—Anti-Monster Hunters Association? Monster Savers Association? whatever—is hereby called to order. I wish I had thought to bring my gavel."

"You mean Dreelix's gavel," pointed out Spontayne.

"Yes, of course."

"We'll just have to try and do our best without it," said Willowquisp, slapping at a mosquito. "Shall we get on with it?"

"Well, I suppose we should wait for the nymph and her little pet.[1] Kind of pointless to start without them, isn't it?"

"Shh, listen—here she comes!"

The sudden scent of wildflowers blew by upon a spring breeze, accompanied by a haunting feminine voice singing a wordless tune. The singing stopped as the woman reached the backs of the three men seated together, side by side, on the forest floor. She placed a hand upon the shoulders of both Willowquisp the Zoophile and Spontayne the Studious, and planted a kiss firmly upon Buntleby's bald head. "Hello, gentlemen," she said in a silky voice.

"Azurielle," acknowledged Buntleby.

"I wore a hooded robe, so you needn't worry about looking at me," said Azurielle, pulling the hood up over her head to hide her unearthly beauty. "It's safe now; you can turn around."

Hesitantly, the three Monster Hunters turned to face her, snatching a quick peek and glancing away. When their vision wasn't obliterated by her supernatural beauty, they dared a longer look, and finally faced her fully. She sat with her legs bent at her side, her hooded robe obscuring her face but doing little to hide the delicate curves of her body.

"My, but you're a twitchy bunch today," she commented with a smile.

"Can you blame us?" griped Willowquisp. "The last time we got a look at your true features, we were all blinded or killed outright."[2]

"All water under the bridge," said Buntleby, waving a dismissive hand. "We are here now to bring you a warning: Some of our members plan mischief against one of your forest creatures."

While the Monster Hunters couldn't

by Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi

1. The term "pet" is misleading when used to describe the relationship between a pseudodragon and its companion, as any pseudodragon is quick to point out. There are two ways for a human to become the companion of one of these creatures: Either the human can summon the pseudodragon (via the wizard spell *find familiar*), or the pseudodragon can choose the human. A pseudodragon looking for a human companion uses its inherent telepathic powers to "eavesdrop" upon the minds of candidates. If it likes what it learns, it presents itself and makes its final decision based upon the human's reaction. (People who express overwhelming joy at the prospect are generally shoo-ins.)

Humans aren't the only race found as pseudodragon companions, although they are the most common. Demihumans (usually elves or halflings; less frequently, gnomes) are occasionally given the opportunity for such an honor, and the forest-dwelling pseudodragons are not against taking as companions members of such sylvan races as nymphs, dryads, or centaurs.

2. See "The Ecology of the Nymph" in *DRAGON Magazine* #240 for all of the sordid details.

see it under the hood of Azurielle's garment, her eyes narrowed to angry slits. "That greedy pig Dreelix, no doubt!" she spat.

Willowquisp's eyebrows shot up and he cast a quick glance in Buntleby's direction.

"Er, yes," admitted Buntleby.

"What's his twisted scheme this time? Chop a treant in half to see if there's anything magical about its sap? Pull the wings off of pixies and grind them into pixie dust? Slice off a unicorn's horn and use it for a magical backscratcher?"

"Nothing so devious," said Buntleby. "He merely wishes to capture a pseudodragon to milk it of its venom."[3]

"I believe there is also some plan afoot to use the magical properties of its scales in some color-changing magic," added Willowquisp.[4] "And I think the creature's blood has some magical uses as well."[5]

"Yes, thank you, Willowquisp," said Buntleby irritably. The elderly sage pursed his lips and shut up.

"And how does he intend to capture a pseudodragon?" asked the nymph.

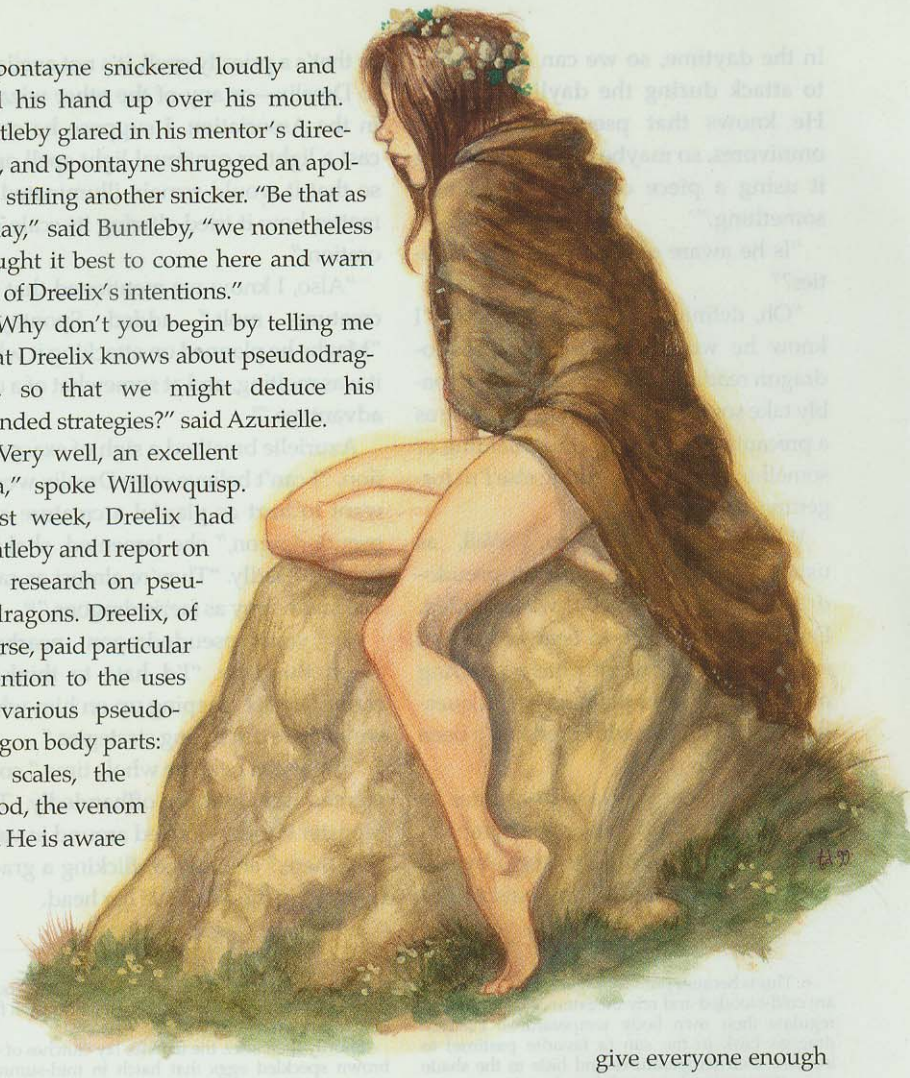
"As to that, I cannot say. I admit, he and I have had our little differences in the past, but I must give him credit for a brilliant mind; the man has a keen intellect and is a clever strategist. I fear my own humble mind might be useless in trying to outwit him."

"I'm surprised at your sudden change of opinion, Buntleby," said the nymph. "Didn't you tell me just last week that Dreelix was a 'bumbling incompetent,' a 'power-hungry blowhard,' and a 'self-aggrandizing buffoon?'"

Spontayne snickered loudly and held his hand up over his mouth. Buntleby glared in his mentor's direction, and Spontayne shrugged an apology, stifling another snicker. "Be that as it may," said Buntleby, "we nonetheless thought it best to come here and warn you of Dreelix's intentions."

"Why don't you begin by telling me what Dreelix knows about pseudodragons, so that we might deduce his intended strategies?" said Azurielle.

"Very well, an excellent idea," spoke Willowquisp. "Last week, Dreelix had Buntleby and I report on our research on pseudodragons. Dreelix, of course, paid particular attention to the uses of various pseudodragon body parts: the scales, the blood, the venom sac. He is aware of the quickness with which they can strike with their tail stingers, and he might perhaps have come up with some way to counter that attack."



"How?" asked the nymph.

"Perhaps a type of cork armor," suggested Buntleby. "The pseudodragon would slash out with its tail, get its stinger stuck in the cork, and that would give everyone enough time to jump it while it was stuck."

"An unlikely scheme," dismissed Azurielle.

"You never know with Dreelix," commented Willowquisp.

"So what else?" the nymph wanted to know.

"Well, let's see. I know we mentioned that pseudodragons are active primarily

3. A pseudodragon has a barbed stinger at the end of its highly flexible tail. The stinger is extremely sharp, like a hypodermic needle, and is attached to a venom sac in the bulbous end of the tail. Pseudodragons are adept at attacks with their stingers, striking at +4 to hit and inflicting no damage with their high-precision strikes. The tail is long enough to permit the creature to attack enemies directly ahead; the pseudodragon arches its tail over its body like a scorpion. Each stinger hit requires the victim to make a successful saving throw vs. poison or enter a state of catalepsy that lasts for 1–6 days. During this time, the victim appears to be quite dead, but there is a 75% chance that he or she wakes up unharmed after the catalepsy runs its course. (The other 25% of the time the victim dies.) The results of all stinger strikes are completely random—the pseudodragon cannot choose to use a lethal dose, and repeated doses of pseudodragon venom have no cumulative effect. As might be expected, pseudodragons are immune to the effects of their own venom.

Pseudodragon poison can be sold for about 100 gold pieces per ounce. A slain pseudodragon yields about 12 ounces from its venom sac; living pseudodragons can be "milked" (against their will; they see the process as extremely demeaning) for about 20 ounces a week.

4. Although their scale coloration is normally a reddish brown, pseudodragons have a chameleon-like ability to alter their colors to blend in with the local environment. This is done through specialized cells, called chromatophores, imbedded in the skin. The pseudodragon's outer skin consists of many tiny, translucent scales made of keratin (the same substance that composes human hair and nails). Layers of skin directly below the scales contain fixed blobs of reddish-brown color and free-floating blobs of a darker substance, melanin. The pseudodragon alters its coloration by means of nerve impulses directing the positioning of the melanin granules: By spreading throughout the cells, the darker melanin obscures the red pigmentation and causes a color change in the pseudodragon. There are several layers of skin, each with a different shade of melanin, allowing the pseudodragon to become green, brown, black, or shades between. A pseudodragon's skin need not be all the same color at once, either, for it can create camouflage patterns to aid it in blending into the forest environment. Because of these chameleon abilities, a pseudodragon has an 80% chance of remaining undetected in a forest environment by creatures unable to see invisible objects.

As a result of these abilities, pseudodragon skin can be used in the production of *rings of chameleon power, potions of rainbow hues,* and *cloaks of elvenkind.*

5. Pseudodragon blood is often used in the creation of *rings of spell resistance.* This is due to the highly magical nature of the pseudodragon: It not only has a 35% magic resistance but can also transmit this resistance to its companion through physical contact. Many pseudodragons enjoy perching on their companions' heads or shoulders; it gives the pseudodragon a good view, grants the companion the 35% magic resistance, and, by letting the companion do all the walking, subtly reminds the individual of his or her true place in the relationship.

in the daytime, so we can expect him to attack during the daylight hours.[6] He knows that pseudodragons are omnivores, so maybe he'll try trapping it using a piece of meat for bait or something."[7]

"Is he aware of their telepathic abilities?"

"Oh, definitely," replied Buntleby. "I know he wouldn't want the pseudodragon reading his mind, so he'll probably take some kind of countermeasure as a precaution: a ring of mind shielding or something similar. Anything else I'm forgetting?"

Willowquisp spoke up. "Well, as usual, I tried briefing him on pseudodragon mating habits but was rebuffed. Dreelix doesn't care to hear about that sort of thing, as it usually has no bearing on how to capture the monster in question or what to do with it once it's been slain."[8]

"Did he mention plans to counter its camouflage ability?" asked the nymph.

"Faerie fire would be the obvious choice," commented Willowquisp, "But as that's a priestly spell, it's not available to Dreelix—or any of the other wizards in the Association. I suppose he could cast a light or continual light spell on it, so that it would remain illuminated no matter how it tried altering its scale coloration."

"Also, I know we mentioned that the creatures molt," added Spontayne. "Maybe he planned on attacking it while it was molting, and at somewhat of a disadvantage."[9]

Azurielle breathed a sigh of exasperation. "I can't believe even Dreelix would want to hurt as playful a creature as a pseudodragon," she lamented, shaking her head sadly. "They're almost as carefree and happy as faerie dragons."[10]

"Is your pseudodragon nearby?" asked Buntleby. "I'd hate to think of crafty Dreelix creeping up on him while we sat here discussing strategies."

"He's been here the whole time," commented the nymph offhandedly. The Monster Hunters looked around in vain. "Up there," she added, flicking a graceful hand in the air above her head.

The Monster Hunters looked up and, after much searching, could gradually discern what appeared to be a green and black mottled face among the branches of the trees, its yellow, reptilian eyes staring down at them with feverish intensity.

The pseudodragon leapt down from its perch in the branch overhead, and leathery wings flapped it safely to the ground. It walked over to Azurielle and sat by her side, keeping a wary eye on the three Monster Hunters. "It's okay, Cuddles, they're friends," replied the nymph.[11]

Keeping its yellow eyes on the three strangers, the pseudodragon altered its coloration; the green and black mottling that hid it so well among the foliage of the trees became a reddish-brown. It twitched its tail back and forth, as if reminding everyone present to behave themselves, then yawned impressively, showing off its rows of razor-sharp teeth.[12]

"Amazing," remarked Spontayne. "A truly impressive creature."

"He's a cutey, all right," Azurielle

6. This is because pseudodragons, like all reptiles, are cold-blooded and rely on external conditions to regulate their own body temperatures. Pseudodragons bask in the sun (a favorite pastime) to increase their temperatures and hide in the shade when they get too hot. At night, when the temperature drops, the creatures become sluggish, striking at –2 to hit. They prefer spending the night in the safety of their lair: a hollow tree, cave, or even an underground burrow. (They'll lair in abandoned burrows, but do not dig burrows of their own.) Here they store their treasures (any bright, shiny thing they come across in their travel): bits of colored glass, polished pieces of metal (including coins), and especially gemstones of all sorts. (A typical pseudodragon lair contains ten times the normal amount of Treasure Type Q, plus frequently Treasure Types J, K, or M as well.) Pseudodragons value their treasures because of their attractiveness rather than for their inherent value; a highly polished copper piece is worth far more to a pseudodragon than a tarnished gold piece.

During winter, the pseudodragon hibernates in its lair, sleeping through the coldest season and awakening in the spring when it warms up.

Although the pseudodragon prefers daytime activity, it has excellent night vision. Pseudodragons possess infravision with a range of 60 feet and can see invisible objects (including other camouflaged pseudodragons).

7. While omnivorous, pseudodragons prefer meat above all else. Their diet consists primarily of rodents and small birds, and when those aren't available, leaves, fruits, and berries. Pseudodragons are somewhat finicky eaters and refuse to touch carrion.

8. Pseudodragons are solitary creatures, coming together only in the springtime to mate. During mating season, it isn't unusual to find gatherings of dozens of pseudodragons together. For 3 days, the small pseudodragon horde does little else, changing partners frequently and stopping only long enough to grab a quick bite to eat. They are extremely irritable toward trespassers during this time (especially the males) and immediately attack any intruders. At the end of the 3-day ritual, each pseudodragon flies off to its own territory.

Shortly thereafter, the females lay clutches of 4–6 brown speckled eggs that hatch in mid-summer. Because of the pseudodragon mating ritual, it is possible for each of the eggs to have been fertilized by a different male. Once the eggs hatch, the female pseudodragon cares for her young all that summer and autumn, teaching them to hunt and fly and sharing her lair with them. They hibernate together all winter; in the spring the young fly off to establish their own territories and start their own adult lives. Pseudodragons live for 10–15 years.

Pseudodragon eggs can be sold for as much as 10,000 gold pieces on the open market. Hatchlings can fetch up to 20,000 gold pieces to the right buyer. (Wizards, especially those without access to the *find familiar* spell, are the primary target audience.)

9. Like most reptiles, pseudodragons continue to grow throughout their lives. While their first year's growth spurt is fairly rapid, the growth cycle slows down after that and the creature's size increases at a much slower rate for the rest of its life.

As the pseudodragon's body grows, it gets too big for its skin and it sheds the outer layer. Unlike a snake, however, which usually crawls out of its old skin all at once and leaves it fairly intact (although inside out), a pseudodragon's old skin flakes off in bits and pieces. Anyone hoping to stumble across a pseudodragon floundering about as it struggles out of its old skin is in for a disappointment; since the skin flakes off in pieces, the pseudodragon is in no way hampered by the process. The creature aids the process by rubbing up against rocks, the hardened bark of ancient trees, and so forth.

A newly hatched pseudodragon sheds its skin monthly for the first year or so, then about twice a year thereafter. Males tend to grow somewhat larger and faster than females, but not noticeably so.

10. The faerie dragon is a chaotic offshoot of the pseudodragon race. While roughly the same size, the faerie dragon's wings are those of a butterfly instead of those of a dragon, and it lacks the pseudodragon's poisonous tail stinger. Their scales change color throughout their lives as they age; instead of the pseudodragon's chameleon abilities, the faerie dragon goes one step further with full invisibility. They share the same love for practical jokes, although with a faerie dragon's genius-level intelligence and spell use, their pranks tend to be even more elaborate than those of pseudodragons.

On the other hand, the faerie dragon is a strict herbivore, subsisting solely on fruits, nuts, berries, honey, and grains. Unlike pseudodragons, a faerie dragon's innate magic resistance increases as it ages. Finally, it has developed a gaseous breath weapon and prefers the company of sprites and pixies over human or demihuman companions. Despite their differences, though, pseudodragons and faerie dragons enjoy each others' company.

11. Pseudodragons have no spoken language, communicating among themselves via telepathy. While they have individual "names" that they use among themselves, these names are complicated to translate into a spoken tongue. As an example, a pseudodragon's "thought-name" might be "Playful Investigator-Who-Once-Got-His-Nose-Stuck-in-a-Beehive-and-Tried-Cornering-a-Skunk-in-a-Cave-That-One-Time." The "thought-name" is expressed instantly telepathically but is cumbersome when spoken aloud. Therefore, pseudodragons with human companions frequently allow themselves to be given a human "pet" name, often a childishly silly one—"Snooky," "Pookums," or "Boo-Boo," for instance. Pseudodragons revel in the "cuteness" of their pet names and often brag among themselves over who has the cutest name.

12. The teeth of a pseudodragon jut from the jaws, extending beyond the lips even when the creature's mouth is closed. The teeth are irregularly spaced, somewhat like a crocodile's, and inflict 1–3 points of damage upon those enemies bitten. Although pseudodragons have tiny claws, they are not used in combat. Rather, they help the creature keep its perch in tree branches and aid it in climbing.

agreed, bending over to scratch it behind its horns.[13] "Aren't you, my widdle cutesy-wootsie-wookums?" The pseudodragon purred in delight.[14]

"Do you think Dreelix will be after this particular one?" asked Spontayne.

"Probably," replied Buntleby. "It's the only one he knows of specifically. I'm sure he figures there are a bunch of them somewhere in the forest, but it's a big forest, and he knows where Azurielle likes to hang out. If he knows that she has a pet pseudodragon—"

The pseudodragon growled in anger at Buntleby.

"I mean, of course, if he knows that she's got a pseudodragon as a valued companion ..." Buntleby amended; the pseudodragon snorted his acceptance of this version of events. "... then it's only logical to assume that he'll try to capture, uh, Cuddles here," he finished.

"I suppose that makes sense," sighed the nymph sadly, looking down at her scaly friend and rubbing him underneath his jaw. "When do you think he's likely to attack?"

The three Monster Hunters looked sidelong at each other; Spontayne gave Buntleby a nearly imperceptible nod.

"Well, knowing Dreelix," began Buntleby, "probably—*now*!"

The three Monster Hunters sprang as one onto the nymph and her reptilian companion. Buntleby snatched the pseudodragon's tail near the tip, just below the bulbous venom sac; Willowquisp grabbed at its neck, near the jawline, and clamped its mouth shut with one hand. Spontayne, meanwhile, leapt spread-eagled onto Azurielle, pinning her underneath his body. He grappled with the hood of her garment, holding it shut with one hand while he hugged her close to his body with the other arm, preventing her from fleeing or using her innate dimension door abilities to escape. "No blinding us this time!" he chortled to the nymph.

"What are you doing? What do you want?" cried the nymph. Muffled by her robe and Spontayne's hand, it came out more like "Mutt are oo dune? Mutta oo watt?"

Buntleby, apparently, had no trouble making out the nymph's questions. "The pseudodragon, of course. He comes with us, we let you go, you don't try interfering with us. As simple as that." He and Willowquisp held the prone pseudodragon at arm's length between them; Willowquisp gingerly transferred custody of the creature's head to Buntleby, and the wizard stood with one hand on the creature's tail and one hand around its neck. "Try anything, and your little pal here pays the price. All we want is a little venom, a little blood, and maybe a scale or two. We'll even give him back to you when we're done, pretty much none the worse for wear. How does that sound? Do we have a deal?"

Azurielle gave a cry of frustration and tried pulling free of Spontayne's grasp, to no avail.

"You really are being most unreasonable," said Buntleby. "And here I've gone out of my way to be nice."

"All right, I think this has gone on far enough," replied the pseudodragon, shifting form.

Buntleby stood, mouth open in shock, as the body of the winged lizard he held began flowing, altering, changing. In the space of a heartbeat or two, he found himself grasping no longer a lizard but a wizard, one identical in all respects to himself, right down to the bald head.

"Buntleby!" said Buntleby in astonishment, letting go of the newly formed wizard and taking an involuntary step backward.

"Hello, Dreelix," replied Buntleby—the real one. "I believe the jig is up, as they say."

Face red, the fake Buntleby's facial features changed, repositioning themselves into Dreelix's scowling countenance. His frame also dropped several inches in height, and he was forced to look up at the man he had just been caught impersonating.

"Why are—? When—? How did—?" he sputtered.

13. With the exception of the lengthy stinger-tipped tail, pseudodragons resemble tiny red dragons. Like red dragons, they have impressive horns jutting back from their heads, but these are not used in combat. They also have a frill of hardened skin on either side of their narrow faces; this frill joins with the two large horns at the top of the head and connects them to each other as well. The horns and frills are permanent fixtures to the pseudodragon's skull and are not shed when the creature molts.

14. While they have no spoken language, pseudodragons can make a wide variety of vocalizations to express their moods. Among their repertoire: a rasping purr, denoting pleasure; a sibilant hiss, like that of a snake, expressing unpleasant surprise; a bird-like chirp, denoting desire (pseudodragons often "chirp" at their companions when begging for food scraps); and a throaty growl when angry.

"I figured you'd try something like this," Buntleby explained. "So Azurielle and I made sure we were ready for you. Cuddles trailed you all the way through the forest, and projected the images directly to Azurielle.[15] Of course, since I was already with her, she realized that you had to be a fake."

Dreelix fumed, his face turning redder by the moment. A vein started throbbing at his temple, and he was unable to form coherent words yet, although his lips twitched and his teeth ground together, as if fighting to hold them in. He remained silent.

"So now what do we do?" inquired Willowquisp, his features sloughing off and becoming those of gangly Zantoullios. He swallowed self-consciously as he looked over at Buntleby, a sheepish, sickly grin on his face.

"I'll tell you what you do," snapped Buntleby. "One, you get off of Azurielle, Grindle. It is Grindle, isn't it?" Spontayne looked guiltily up at Buntleby and nodded. He released his illusion and immediately went from a tall, lanky wizard in fashionable robes and sporting an impressive black mustache, to a vastly overweight wizard with jiggly folds of flesh depending from his upper arms and stains from his most recent meal visible on the worn robe covering his prodigious belly. Grindle looked down in shame but retained his hold on the nymph as if frightened to let her go.

"Two," continued Buntleby, "The three of you apologize to Azurielle for your atrocious behavior, and beg for her forgiveness. Three, you hightail it out of the forest and never, ever set foot in Azurielle's grove again!"

"Forget it, Buntleby!" snapped Dreelix, finding his words at last. "I came here for a pseudodragon, and I'm not leaving here without one! Grindle! Hold her steady; don't let her escape. It's still three against one, Buntleby; like those odds? Now then, nymph, I'm going to count to three, and if you know what's good for you, you'll have produced your little Cuddles—the real one, this time, no tricks —otherwise, this little forest of yours and a few of my fireballs will become very well acquainted."

"You wouldn't!" the nymph screamed. It came out "Oo oodint!" from beneath Grindle's chubby hand.

"You're bluffing," said Buntleby. "Not even you would be that mean."

"One," counted Dreelix. And to Buntleby: "I never bluff."

"Stop him!" screamed Azurielle. "Op im!" is all that came out.

"Last time, you threatened to stomp on baby bunnies if Azurielle didn't do what you asked, but you didn't do that, either, Dreelix. Personally, I think you're just a big softy inside."

Dreelix was starting to sweat, knowing that he wouldn't really burn down the forest just to obtain some pseudodragon fluids for experiments. He knew that, and Buntleby—curse him!—knew it too, but the silly nymph didn't, and that was all that mattered. If Buntleby hadn't shown up to spoil things, he'd have his pseudodragon by now and everything would be fine! But no, here was Buntleby calling Dreelix's bluff, and in front of two other Monster Hunters, no less! Trying to make Dreelix look stupid, was he? Like an ineffectual leader? He'd have to show them who was boss!

"Two," he snarled.

"Well, you've made your choice," replied Buntleby, shaking his head sadly. "Get 'em, boys!"

Dreelix got as far as "Thr—" before the branches overhead exploded in a swarm of movement. At first it looked like the local flora was undergoing the rites of autumn all at once, dropping a season's worth of leaves in one fell swoop. Then the dropping shapes began changing color, from greens and browns and black to a familiar reddish-brown. No fewer than six angry pseudodragons swarmed all around the gathered party, stinger-tipped tails stabbing left and right at the three renegade Monster Hunters.[16]

Grindle took a hit in his rump and collapsed, landing on Azurielle and eliciting a whoof of expelled air from her. Zantoullios hid beneath wildly swaying hands, ducking from the enraged lizards and trying to fend them off. He, too, was ultimately unsuccessful and slumped over after taking a hit or two.

As might have been expected, Dreelix was the last to fall. One pseudodragon dived at him tail first, a malicious grin spread across its reptilian face. There was a solid *thunk* as the creature's stinger stabbed at the wizard's chest. Instead of falling over, however, the wizard just grinned back at the surprised beast. The creature's surprise intensified when it realized its tail was stuck fast, and it flapped its wings furiously trying to stay aloft. Dreelix slapped it mercilessly in the face.

Another pseudodragon hit Dreelix in the back, with similar results. It wasn't until a third creature managed to stab the wizard in the side of the neck that Dreelix fell over with a look of complete shock on his face, dragging the two struggling but stuck pseudodragons down with him.

Buntleby came quickly to their rescue, gently pulling their tails from the unconscious wizard's robes. "I'll be darned," he exclaimed, pulling open Dreelix's robes at the neck. He removed a dart board that the wizard had been wearing on a strap around his neck; there was another under his robes at his back. "Cork armor. Who'd have thought?"

Azurielle had finally managed to extricate herself from Grindle's unconscious form, and she walked over to Buntleby's side. "What are we going to do with them now?" she asked.

"You leave that to me," Buntleby replied.

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15. If a pseudodragon opts to take a human companion, it can transmit everything it hears and sees to its partner, so long as the two remain no more than 240 yards apart from each other. This allows the companion to use the pseudodragon as a spy, gaining the creature's infravision and invisibility-detection abilities while it is so linked. Once established, the audio-visual link can be broken by either of the two participants at any time, at will.

A pseudodragon can "link" with only one individual, its chosen companion; once the bond of companionship has been established, the pseudodragon is unable to "link" with anyone else, unless the companion is slain and the pseudodragon elects later to take on another. This makes choosing the right companion a very serious matter to the pseudodragon, as once a companion is chosen, the bond can be broken only through the death of one of the participants.

16. Although pseudodragons are normally reclusive creatures, they aren't against banding together in numbers when the need dictates. They are, after all, neutral good, with an intelligence equal to that of the average human. And if a forest nymph requests aid from a pseudodragon, even one to which she is not "bonded," it's a good bet that the pseudodragon will respond to the best of its abilities.

Buntleby, sitting at the head table of the meeting hall, tapped three times on the table with Dreelix's beloved gavel. "I hereby call this session of the Monster Hunters Association to order," he intoned in a close approximation of Dreelix's voice.

"What's going on? Where's Dreelix?" asked Lady Ablasta, a look of concern on her face. Lady Ablasta was set in her ways and didn't much like change, if she could help it. Clearly, the Association president's sudden replacement had thrown her for a loop.

"Oh, he's here," replied Buntleby. "But I'm afraid he won't be able to attend to his usual duties this week, so I'm graciously standing in for him. Willowquisp? Spontayne? Are you ready?"

"Ready," they replied in unison and approached a hastily hung curtain from behind the head table.

"My fellow Monster Hunters," began Buntleby, "if you'll recall, last week Dreelix asked Willowquisp and me to brief the Association on our findings after researching the pseudodragon. We were concerned about his ultimate plans, and he told us not to worry about them. Well, it seems our illustrious leader got a little ahead of himself, deciding to take matters into his own hands. This, alas, is the sad result."

With a flourish, Willowquisp and Spontayne pulled back the curtain. There was a unified gasp from the audience as the Monster Hunters got a good look at what was on exhibit there.

Dreelix, Grindle, and Zantoullios stood motionless, propped up against the wall and staring ahead at nothing. Dreelix was positioned with a finger up his nose, Zantoullios was sucking his thumb like a baby, and Grindle was apparently captured in mid-scratch, his right hand poised at his left armpit.[17] Each wore a torn and tattered robe filled with the telltale holes of bite marks; scratches covered their bodies, and dried, reptilian dung was smeared on their faces. On a placard around each of their necks, printed in Buntleby's precise handwriting, read the inscription: *"We should have known better."*

Old Gumphrey, easily the oldest of the Monster Hunters, cackled aloud in glee at the sight. "Look at that!" he chortled.

"I believe we can now officially state for the record that the Monster Hunters will not be pursuing the pseudodragon line of research in the future," said Buntleby. "And perhaps at next week's meeting the trio standing before you will feel up to talking and can give you their side of the story. In the meantime, here's what I saw of the events ..."

There was absolute silence in the audience, as each of the assembled wizards and sages of the illustrious Monster Hunters Association strained to hear Buntleby's every word.

If Dreelix could hear Buntleby, he gave no indication of it.

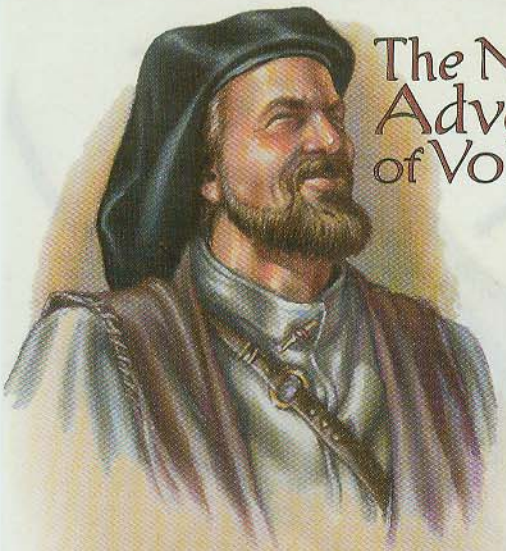
Johnathan M. Richards was quite shocked to realize that this article marks the eighth appearance of the Monster Hunters Association. Fans of the series can find their previous entries in DRAGON® Magazine *issues #227 (osquip), #240 (nymph), Annual 2 (shambling mound), #246 (flumph), #258 (flail snail), #261 (dark naga), and #262 (jermlaine).*

17. Victims of pseudodragon venom enter a cataleptic state, known for a loss of voluntary control of the muscles and an overall muscular rigidity. While in this state, the victim's body can be moved into any position and the victim will remain like that until the catalepsy ends. Circulation, respiration, digestion, and similar organic functions continue during this time, but they are slowed down to such a rate that the victim might appear dead.

Pseudodragons, being pranksters, take full advantage of this quality of their venom to place their helpless victims into a variety of amusing positions. The victims usually fall over when stung, and since a pseudodragon lacks the strength to lift a human to his or her feet, the creature must make do with humorous prone positions. Favorites include the "I'm swimming on dry land" position, the "I'm trying, but I can't even do one push-up" position, and the perennial favorite, the "Dead bug" position (victim lying on his or her back with arms and legs sticking straight up).

Pseudodragons frequently make full use of multiple victims. A party of three cataleptics might be arranged in the "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" pattern; a party of four victims might be arranged in a square to give the appearance that each is sleeping soundly, using the belly of a friend as a pillow. With enough victims, a pseudodragon might even try spelling out short words.

Since pseudodragon-induced catalepsy can last up to 6 days, the victim might exit the state with exceptional hunger, thirst, and weakness, and might have bedsores if he or she was left in one position for too long.



The New Adventures of Volo

By Ed Greenwood
Illustrated by Ron Spencer

Hin Nobody Knows

Volothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like the glistening gems formed by dew on the grass at sunrise upon pleasant mornings.

This day I abandon my customary format (not for the first time, nor the last) to write of two often-overlooked races of Faerûn: halflings and gnomes. While many tend to think of them as cute and comical, or "children" mentally and culturally inferior to humankind, such thinking is both insulting and dangerous. Think of them as the breeding-stock for the most nimble thieves, invention-crafters, and free thinkers in the world, and you'll be nearer the mark. As the sage Thalovaem of Myratma said, "'Tis one of the brightest wonders of the gods that such small bodies hold such large and busy minds."

Halflings

First off, these folk call themselves "hin" more than any other term, though they far more often speak collectively of their clans rather than their race. (One of the most famous clans holds the surname "Minstrelwish," but there are hundreds of others.)

Halflings dwell comfortably with humans, in human cities, just about everywhere in the Realms that doesn't tend to look on the folk as potential slaves—so you won't find halflings cozily underfoot in the cities of Calimshan, Thay, Unther, Mulhorand, the Tashalar, or in Mulmaster, Zhentil Keep, or such rough areas as Glister.

They're also largely shut out of the wild Sword Coast North areas where the Uthgardt barbarians hold sway, and are firmly kept out of Halruaa by the mages thereof (who regard halflings as meddlesome little thieves far too dangerous to allow near magical experiments, strong enchantments, and valuable spellbooks and magical items).

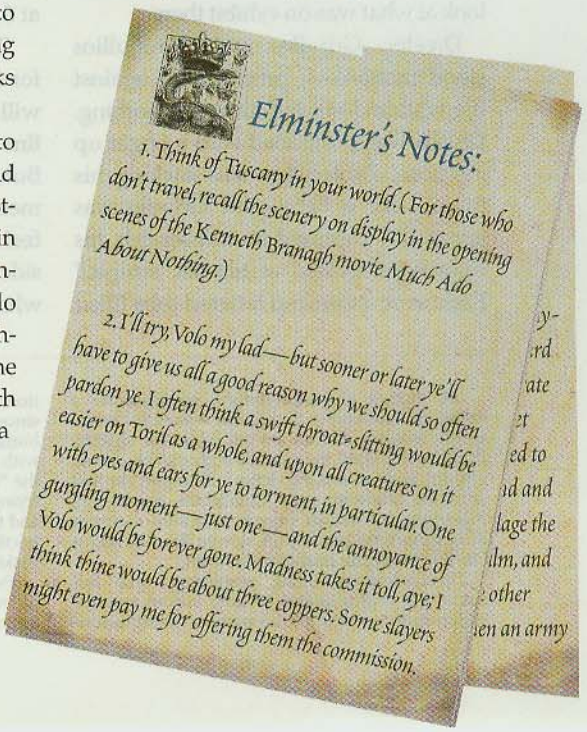
With that said, halflings do tend to build many tiny villages that don't end up on human maps—such as one in easternmost Cormyr (Besert), and others in Impiltur (including Klandle, Mistrenpost, and Ondle's Spur)—but they do dominate at least two shared-with-humans settlements: Secomber (in the Sword Coast North) and Ethdale (north of Telflamm at the eastern end of the Sea of Fallen Stars).

There are also two large halfling kingdoms in Faerûn: Luiren (which is often mangled by humans, even bards and sages who should know better, into "Lluiren" or "Lurien"), and the little-known land of Delmyr.

Luiren

This verdant land of well-irrigated farms and winding lanes is devoted to growing food crops; even the rockiest, poor-soil slopes are given over to grape-growing. Produce goes out from Luiren by the thousands of boat-loads each year, to feed many mouths elsewhere in Faerûn.[1] Because so much of what Sword Coast folk eat comes from Luiren, most folk have heard of it.

Thanks to talespinning bards, most folk even have the right mind-picture of Luiren: a realm of lush, bucolic farmlands, with pipesmoking, contented, and well-fed halflings as the masters of all. One might think such a verdant "breadbasket" would be (if you'll pardon the expression[2]) ripe for plunder or



Elminster's Notes:

1. Think of Tuscany in your world. (For those who don't travel, recall the scenery on display in the opening scenes of the Kenneth Branagh movie Much Ado About Nothing.)

2. I'll try, Volo my lad—but sooner or later ye'll have to give us all a good reason why we should so often pardon ye. I often think a swift throat-slitting would be easier on Toril as a whole, and upon all creatures on it with eyes and ears for ye to torment, in particular. One gurgling moment—just one—and the annoyance of Volo would be forever gone. Madness takes it toll, aye; I think thine would be about three coppers. Some slayers might even pay me for offering them the commission.

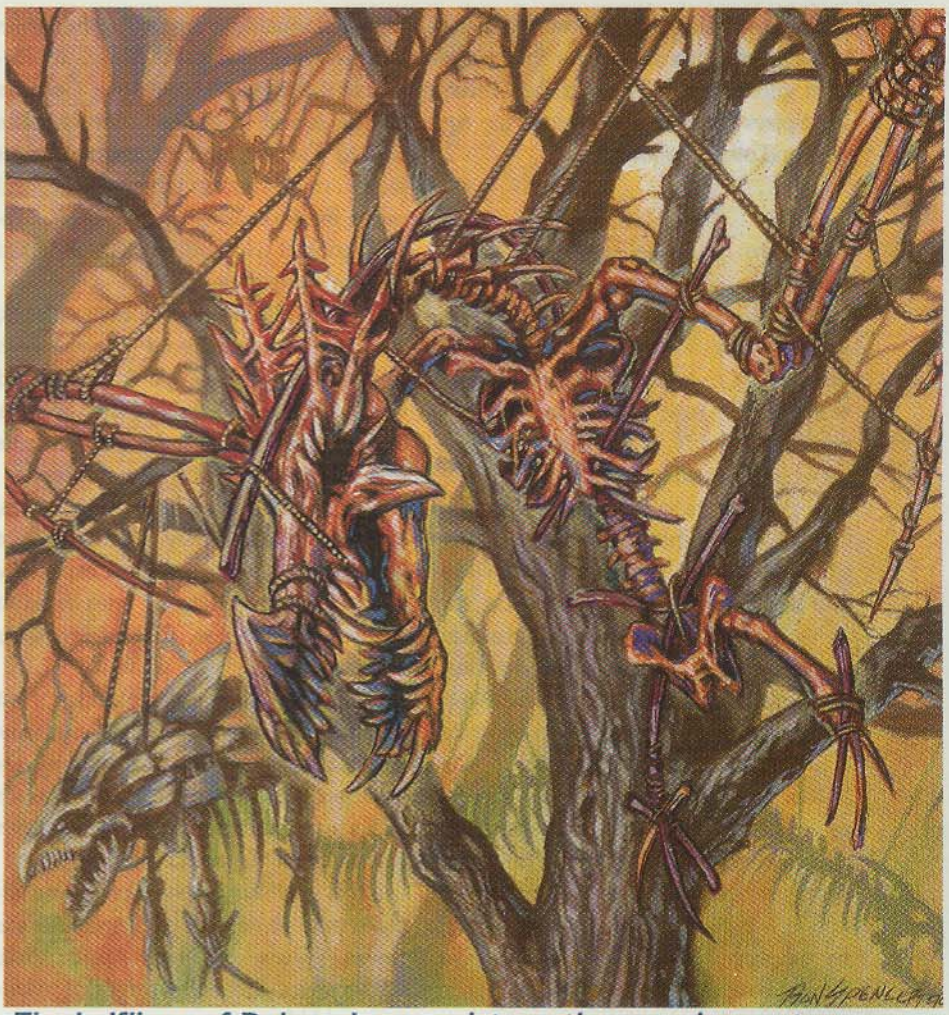
conquering, and you'd be right. A long-ago doppleganger infiltration almost succeeded in slaughtering the hin because it was slow, working down from the hills and isolated steads before larger communities were assaulted—but swiftly hired mercenaries and a few friendly mages saved the halfling realm.

Two more recent invasions (the first when a wayward pirate fleet tried to land and pillage the realm, and the other when an army of nomads out of the Shaar tried to overrun Luiren) were both foiled the same way: Mages of Halruaa arrived unbidden and unexpected, literally out of thin air, to smash the attackers—and vanished again promptly thereafter.

The message they thus sent was pointed enough that even Calishite slavers understood and heeded it; attacks on Luiren (above the level of apple-stealing raids) have ceased.

Delmyr

In contrast to Luiren, Delmyr is a keep-to-itself land where every last foot of ground hasn't been tamed to farming. A less than alert traveler passing near Delmyr might never know that the unbroken woods that line the eastern flanks of The Glittering Spires, east of ruined Winterkeep, are in fact a kingdom. I've yet to learn who's currently king of Delmyr, though I know the throne is traditionally supported by six hereditary barons who feud continuously and in a non-violent, almost affectionate manner.[3]



The halflings of Delmyr have an interesting warning system.

Delmyran halflings dwell in balance with nature, planting either less or more as the growing conditions suggest. They confine their agriculture to melon patches in the clearings, mushroom patches in caverns they've dug beneath the roots of the trees (they dwell in shallow delves beneath the forest mould), and vineyards on the mountain slopes for wine, beans, and marrow.

Delmyrans guard their produce against the abundant deer, birds, and other forest life with their slings and crossbows, and most are deadly shots. Few outsiders have tried to tangle with them twice, for they can call upon either powerful, reclusive human wizards who dwell in the region, or some other source of mighty magic to fight for them if need be. (I could learn nothing of this, beyond the fact that the hin refer to it as "the Vigilant."[4]) They've erected some impressive monster skeletons (including wyverns, peryton, behir, and even a dragon and a bulette) as mute warning markers around the edges of their woods to prove their might to all visitors.

3. The current King is Joroelner "Whitebeard" Gleddyn, second of that line to rule after almost a thousand years of the Parradyne dynasty. The usual rumors of lost sons of the blood of Parradyne lurking in hiding, awaiting the day of a glorious return to the throne surface frequently.

Joroelner is well-loved, has three stout daughters (eldest to youngest: Barasra, Tchalaedra, and Esmrela) to succeed him if his Queen, Samrasta, dies before him, and he has only one serious critic among the barons: Guldin "Stormbrow" Mazron.

Mazron is currently the most powerful baronial family, closely followed by their traditional foes, the Belrowhin. At one time or another, all of the baronial families have been dominant. The remaining four include the clans of Ambrutter, Daerove, Slaunadda, and Velmairn.

4. And let's keep things that mysterious, shall we? Adventurers take note: "the Vigilant" is well-named, and powerful enough to best almost all adventuring bands of which I've ever taken the measure.

Even many hin don't know the secret of Delmyr's prosperity: Its folk trade with gnomes who dwell in the Glittering Spires (trading food and wine for wire and other metalwares).

Gnomes

Like hin, surface gnomes dwell among the other races in both city and countryside, whereas dwarves largely shun human-dominated settlements, unless they're master armorers unable to resist the lure of that much gold coming steadily their way. Gnomes serve as shopkeepers and down-the-street blacksmiths, and work in the casting and etching of brass, bronze, tin, and pewter to produce everyday goods for trade and human use far more than do the prouder, grimmer dwarves. Most gnomes would rather blend in than stand forth, and keep the peace or slip away than fight or create a disturbance.

The svirfneblin (who are almost revered by their surface brethren, it seems) are another matter. They take stands and battle toe-to-toe with drow and other nasty foes. If they didn't, they'd spend their lives continually fleeing across the Underdark.

Surface gnomes seem to be a race in decline from former greatness, like the dwarves, but who have adapted to living alongside humans, rather than withdrawing and dwindling still further as the dwarves have done. Gnomes can be found in almost every human city in Faerûn, and in most villages along trade-routes where any local racial intolerance is mitigated by constant contact with folk of many different races and customs.

Gnomes also build their own villages, favoring earth-sheltered homes with dug cellars (and escape tunnels), and stone and thatch cottages (often round). Like those of halflings, these settlements often don't show up on human maps.

Most surface gnomes grow potatoes, keep goats, and enjoy placid days of hard work. They love gems, especially rubies, but often lack the wild thirst to possess the things that mark their svirfneblin kin.

One tiny, largely unknown but notable gnome village in the mountains southeast of Leilon, Ieirithymbul, is guarded by a dragon who spends much of his time invisible, and hence has been dubbed their "Unseen Protector."[5]

Fairly-well-known surface gnome villages tend to be part of overland trade routes. These include Anga Vled, Beldenshyn, Elbencort, Fryndul, Skultan, and Urbryur.

Anga Vled

This farming village stands on the north bank of the River Chionthar, a day's ride west of Elturel. It's surrounded by earthen ring-forts to enable the gnomes to gather in safety when trolls, bugbears, human outlaws, goblinkin, and marauding monsters become a problem. Anga Vled's farmers produce many parsnips, carrots, marrows, radishes, asparagus, spiced vegetable bread, and parsnip wine of surpassing potency. It also boasts two good horse doctors who can shoe and train horses, and usually have some healed mounts (left behind by earlier travelers) to sell or trade to passing adventurers.

The most famous citizen of Anga Vled is the sharp-tongued but good-natured Gudelmer Wheelwright, who makes and repairs wagons. His superb skills have been the salvation of many a caravan merchant.

Beldenshyn

"The Bell" stands on the south bank of the Winding Water, at the southernmost swing of that river, west of Trollclaw Ford. It's a stockaded farming village whose inhabitants are known for their long noses, their skill with crossbows (they make and sell both bows and quarrels), and the appallingly stinky longhaired goats they herd all around the village. A human once dubbed the place "Goatreek," and that name (and its more recent variant, "the Goatstink") is still heard amid guffaws in the taverns and shops of Scornubel.

Elbencort

This village of cottages built into garden-cloaked hillsides lies on the trade-road east of Riatavan, where it crosses The Shining Stream due south of the Snowflake Mountains. Its folk are a secretive lot, and with good reason: Many humans would like to learn just where they mine the gems that make them so rich. (The southern flanks of the Snowflakes are studded with crumbling, monster-haunted, trap-filled abandoned mines.)

The Elbencorters sell their gems to passing merchants for steep sums, never seeming to need to make a deal.[6]

Fryndul

This "ghost village" lies on the trade-road just east of the bridge that is itself east of the city of Kormul in the Sharreach. Fryndul is a scattered collection of vine-cloaked, lightly-wooded stone and earthbank homes that most travelers think are ancient tombs or burial mounds. Gnome-spun illusions of scuttling pony-sized spiders keep the idly curious at bay; merchants "in the know" take goods and coins into certain of the "tombs" to trade for the best cut gems to be had in all the Tashalar.[7]

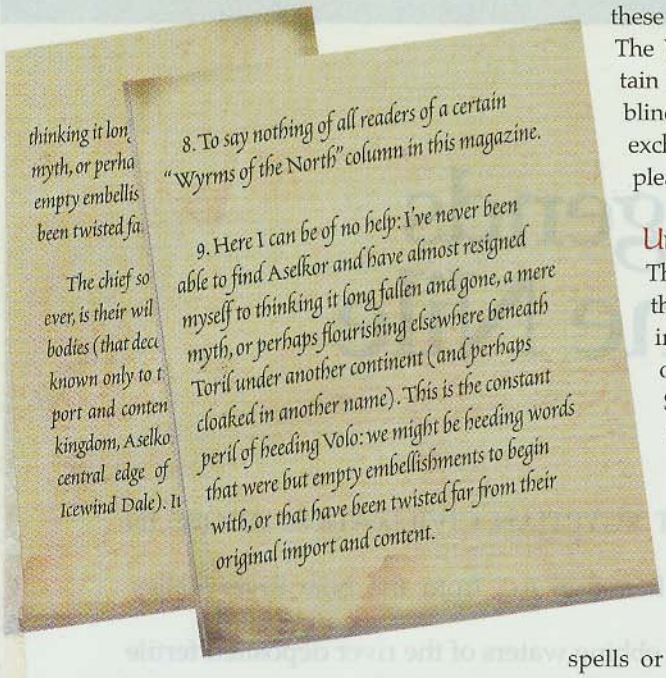
The famous Emerald Leaf (a single mass of emerald so large that a man could sit upon it, which was skillfully

5. The dragon Palarandusk, described in the pages of DRAGON® Magazine #252.

6. In truth, they're selling gems sent up to the surface by svirfneblin of the subterranean city of Kolethloe, which lies right under Elbencort (but almost four miles down)—or so I've been told. Know ye that the svirfneblin, suspicious of all prying humans, might well have dared to lie to me, and might actually be bringing the gems from elsewhere. "Kolethloe" could be nothing but a fancy tale or a code word for something or somewhere else.

Their casual attitude to closing a deal comes from their vast wealth and deep, full pantry cellars; with little need for coin, they'll never be pressured into selling at bargain prices.

7. As with Elbencort, some of the stones sold in Fryndul have secretly been brought to the surface from svirfneblin mines deep in the earth.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Icewind Dale). It
8. To say nothing of all readers of a certain "Wyrms of the North" column in this magazine.
9. Here I can be of no help: I've never been able to find Aselkor and have almost resigned myself to thinking it long fallen and gone, a mere myth, or perhaps flourishing elsewhere beneath Toril under another continent (and perhaps cloaked in another name). This is the constant peril of heeding Volo: we might be heeding words that were but empty embellishments to begin with, or that have been twisted far from their original import and content.

cut into the semblance of an oak leaf) was first seen by human eyes here forty winters ago. Bought for seven, "thousand thousand" pieces of gold by a Waterdhavian noble outbidding a Calishite satrap, it promptly vanished into a villa somewhere, and its present whereabouts remain unknown—despite the best scrying and divination spells wealthy thieves can buy.

Such treasures are rare; more often, thumb-sized emeralds, sapphires, and pieces of polished amber are offered for sale here. Those interested in such treasures should seek the "door graven with a dragon" in the tomb that stands beyond "the winding walk over which leans a crumbling green rock statue of a lithe dancing girl."

Skultan

This village lies just north off the trade-road east of Daerlun, and it is highly valued by travelers and locals alike as a place where broken things are mended for fees, stolen goods can be fenced, and money changed to Cormyrean from Sembian, or back again. One can also trade for wagons, horses, and other goods. Its folk are known for their swift work, swifter negotiations, and utter discretion. Several gnome-run establishments conceal such shady business behind a "front" of serving travelers as bawdy festhalls (staffed by beautiful human women). The most famous of these are The Tumbling Goblets and The Winking Wemic. It's said certain Purple Dragon patrols turn a blind eye to furtive dealings in exchange for bargain prices on a pleasant local company.

Urbryur

This "cave city" is tunneled into the rocky cliffs of a ship-careening bay on the southern coast of Altumbel due south of Spandeliyon. The gnomes of this village, known as "the Urbreir," mine chalk and dig clams. Every so often a whale beaches itself in the bay and is butchered by the Urbreir. Human Altumbens believe the gnomes have either spells or a natural ability to call the whales ashore to a willing death, but there has never been any observed evidence for this view.

The chief source of Urbreir wealth, however, is their willingness to hide (for stiff fees) bodies (that decompose completely in lime pits known only to the gnomes) or sacks of valuables (that the gnomes literally bury in loose chalkdust in certain inner caverns and can recover at will, even years later). Many a pirate crew or adventuring band has stored something too hot to handle in Urbryur. There are rumors of tunnels descending deep into the earth here, but the gnomes smile and say nothing of such things.

Svirfneblin

As for the deep gnomes, there is evidence that once they did not delve so deeply. Most of that evidence consists of abandoned gnome cities not far beneath the surface. The cellars and sewers of Calimport and several other human cities are onetime gnome settlements, and certain sages[8] know that the dracolich Daurgothoth lairs in the abandoned gnome city of Dolblunde north and east of Waterdeep once served this purpose as well. Known entrances to this subterranean labyrinth include the "Bandit Tunnels" in nearby Maiden's Tomb Tor, certain passages in the vast dungeon complex of Undermountain, and a flooded, dragon-sized tunnel leading from the muddy bottom of the River Dessarin itself.

Svirfneblin are also known to live peacefully side-by-side with the Stout Folk in the subterranean dwarven Deep Realm east of the Great Rift. Visitors report that they have a dozen or more fortified subterranean cities.

I've also heard of a gnome kingdom, Aselkor, that lies under the southern central edge of the Endless Ice Sea (near Icewind Dale). Its deep passages are warmed by natural vulcanism and crowded with fungal forests that the gnomes harvest for furniture, food, and drink. They were attracted here by the deposits of rubies (that have yielded fist-sized and even larger stones), and remain here, flourishing under a Gnome King (name and precise location unknown).[9]

In all Faerûn, there is no wizard more deadly than Elminster with his dander up. One man holds the power to raise that dander at will. It's an awesome responsibility, and Ed Greenwood promises to use it only for good … though he wishes good would sometimes come bearing slightly clearer labels.

The reason Beldenshyn is known as "Goatreek."

Legends of the Nile

Long before the rise of the Roman Empire, the world's greatest civilization produced its mightiest heroes.

by
Bruce F. Beyers

illustrated by
Ron Spencer

THE GREAT EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION AROSE IN the 5th millennium B.C. from the Nile River Valley. The swelling and ebbing waters of the river deposited fertile silt year after year, catalyzing bumper crops and providing sustenance for a vast labor population. The people quickly constructed the infrastructure to support an expanding empire and laid the foundations for great engineering feats such as the pyramids. Built as early as 2700 B.C., the pyramids remain as lasting tributes to the engineers who built them.

Only a civilization with a solid agriculture basis could achieve the preeminence of Egypt. The country's surplus manpower provided a large standing army capable of resisting foreign invasion and allowing the empire to flourish.

Egyptian geography was conducive to civilization. It was protected by two inhospitable deserts: the Libyan in the west and the Arabian in the east. This position allowed the pharaohs to concentrate their defenses along the only two remaining avenues of approach: The southern advance followed the Nile through Nubia and into Upper Egypt, while a northern land assault would have to come across the narrow isthmus of the Sinai. Finally, Egypt could be threatened by attack from the Mediterranean Sea. Wisely, the pharaohs maintained a large standing fleet to deny an attack from the sea, and they defended the small isthmus with frequent patrols. Constant campaigns against the Nubians to the south kept that hostile civilization in check. Ramses the Great solidified Egyptian success against Nubia by constructing the great temple of Abu Simbel deep within Nubian territory. This sent a clear message to Nubia: Egypt was the preeminent power of the day.

This ancient Egyptian culture existed for over four thousand years and twenty-six dynasties until finally subsiding under the might of the Persian Empire, lead by Cyrus the Great in 535 B.C. Although Egypt continued to survive in the ancient world, it did not know self-rule again for many centuries. Still, Egypt's culture, traditions, myths, and legends influenced the great empires that followed.

Bruce's eldest son and his friends have recently discovered the D&D® game. If Bruce weren't so busy, he'd join their game!

Imhotep (Asklepios)

13TH-LEVEL FIGHTER/21ST-LEVEL HUMAN PRIEST

STRENGTH	17
DEXTERITY	15
CONSTITUTION	16
INTELLIGENCE	19
WISDOM	24
CHARISMA	15
AC	2 (–1 with *buckler* +2)
HIT POINTS	87
ALIGNMENT	Lawful good
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	See below
SIZE	M (5'11")

Weapon Proficiencies: Mace (specialized), Staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Carpentry (17), Engineering (16), Etiquette (15), Healing (22), Herbalism (17), Reading/Writing (20), Stonemasonry (15)

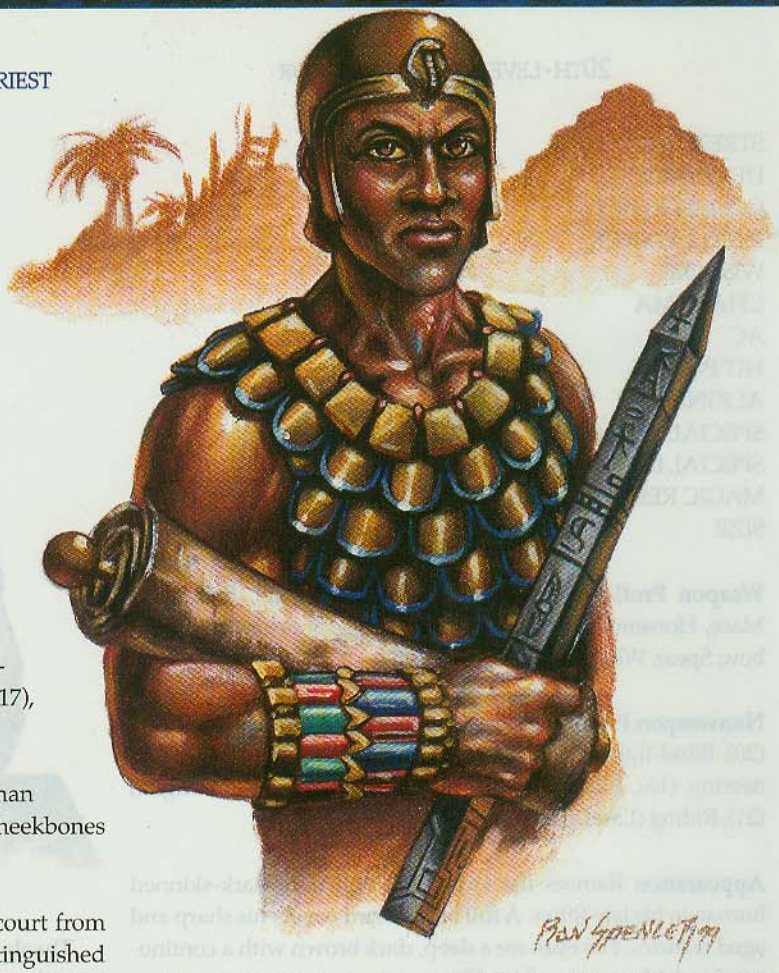
Appearance: Imhotep is a tall, thin, dark-skinned man with short black hair. His eyes are brown and his cheekbones high, giving him a sharp, elfin appearance.

Background: Imhotep was vizier to King Zoser's court from 2686–2613 B.C. Although not of noble birth, he distinguished himself in battle beside his king. Imhotep's loyalty was beyond reproach, and he continually advised Zoser in matters of state and religion. A natural builder, Imhotep was appointed as the royal architect of Zoser's burial chamber. Imhotep designed and constructed the step-sided pyramid at Saqqara, the first stone building of such scale.

Imhotep was known throughout Egypt as one who could perform medical miracles. He apparently saved hundreds of lives with his talents. It is said that his healing was so efficient that those he treated never suffered the same illness again. After Imhotep died in 2648 B.C., praise of his abilities continued for over two thousand years, and he was deified in 535 B.C. as Asklepios, the Greek god of healing and medicine.

Magical Items: Imhotep wears gold and bronze *coin armor* +3. On his left arm is a bronze *buckler* +2 that acts as a medium shield. He wields a *footman's mace* +3 that radiates *protection from evil* and *bless* in a 60' radius.

Imhotep is never seen without his *Book of Wisdom and Healing* or his *staff of healing*. Asklepios insists that all of his priests read his book at some point in their careers. *The Book of Wisdom and Healing*, when read by a lawful good priest, bestows two points of Wisdom and one level immediately. Additionally, the priest gains an extra *curing* spell when attaining the applicable level. Thus, at 1st level the priest gains an additional *cure light wounds*, at 7th level an additional *cure serious wounds*, and at 9th level an additional *cure critical wounds*.



The *staff of healing* acts as a *staff of curing* with unlimited charges and no restrictions to its use per day. The staff can also bestow a *heal* spell up to six times per day and a *regenerate* spell three times per day, and it grants the wielder a +5 bonus to saving throws against all offensive spells and breath weapons.

Roleplaying Notes: Any construction project led by Imhotep is guaranteed to have a highly motivated work force. Thus, throughout the length of the project, consider the entire workforce morale as very high and worker skill as very high. Additionally, cut all construction time and costs by one eighth with no over-head costs to the project. Finally, the completed stonework should stand for 4,000 years, provided no natural or unnatural occurrences destroy the structure prematurely.

Asklepios, as the god of healing, is immune to all poisons and diseases. He can lay on hands (as a 21st-level paladin) once per day. Asklepios has all the innate abilities of a lesser god. Anyone or anything treated by Asklepios for an ailment is immediately cured and forever immune to said ailment. For example, a character treated by Asklepios for mummy-rot is forever immune to mummy-rot. Priests of Asklepios share their deity's power, to a lesser extent, and can improve their patient's immunity to treated ailments by permanently adding a +1 bonus for every three levels of the priest to the patient's saving throw. Thus, a 10th-level priest of Asklepios grants a +4 bonus to the patient's saving throw vs. the specific ailment for which the patient is treated.

Ramses II (Ramses the Great)

20TH-LEVEL HUMAN WARRIOR

STRENGTH	16
DEXTERITY	15
CONSTITUTION	16
INTELLIGENCE	19
WISDOM	21
CHARISMA	16
AC	0 (–3 with *shield* +2)
HIT POINTS	105
ALIGNMENT	Lawful neutral
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	See below
SIZE	M (6'1")

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Footman's Flail, Footman's Mace, Horseman's Flail, Footman's Mace, Shortsword, Shortbow, Spear, Whip, Staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Agriculture (19), Animal Handling (20), Blind-fighting, Charioteering (17), Endurance (16), Engineering (16), Etiquette (16), Reading/Writing (20), Religion (21), Riding (Land-based 24).

Appearance: Ramses the Great is a tall, thin, dark-skinned human in his late fifties. A full black beard covers his sharp and aged features. His eyes are a deep, dark brown with a continuous spark of energy and intelligence.

Background: Ramses the Great led Egypt through a golden age during the 19th dynasty (1279–1213 B.C.). His illustrious reign lasted for sixty-six years. (Pharaohs normally had about a thirty-year reign.) He skillfully recovered the pieces of the old Egyptian Empire through conquest and diplomacy, restoring the kingdom to its 16th century B.C. preeminence. Some have described Ramses' restoration of the kingdom as being a combination of the cults of Seth and Ra in a religiopolitical union. He quickly re-conquered lost territories in Africa and Phoenicia, quelling Nubia, Lybia, and Jordan. His major threat came from the Hittites, who occupied ancient Syria. Despite the Hittites' advantage of iron weapons, Ramses' forces managed to prevail, largely due to the timely arrival of reinforcements at Kadesh. As a result, Hattusili III made peace with the Egyptian pharaoh by offering his daughter's hand in marriage.

After Ramses' marriage to Nefertari, a pax-Egyptian period ensued, including the construction of several great works including the temple of Abu Simbel, the great hypostyle hall in the Temple of Amon at Karnak, and the mortuary temple at Thebes. Nefertari was Ramses' partner in life and co-ruler. When she died, Ramses mourned, spending his remaining years without taking another consort. He dedicated one of the opulent temples of Abu Simbel to his queen and had its walls adorned with images of their life together.

Theologians and historians agree that one of the pharaohs mentioned in the Bible is indeed Ramses the Great. Ramses ruled during the time of Moses and explained away many of the prophet's predictions with science, but when his first-born son died as Moses prophesied, Ramses gave the Jews their freedom, and the Exodus began. Ramses the Great lived to be over eighty years old; he outlived his wife and eleven of his sons, finally turning over the reins of leadership to his twelfth son, Merneptah, in 1213 B.C.

Magical Items: Ramses the Great wears *bronze platemail of Ra* +3, which grants him a 75% resistance to all fire attacks. He carries a *medium shield* +2 and wields a *horseman's flail* +1. His pharaoh's crook is a *rod of lordly might.*

Roleplaying Notes: Ramses and his queen worked hard to restore their kingdom, and they placed the sovereignty of their kingdom and welfare of its populace above all else. Ramses refers to his slaves as the sub-working class and ensures they earn a livable wage. He is as sympathetic as he is wise, and he feels betrayed when his populace does not agree with his policies, a rare instance. Highly intelligent and jovial, he enjoys discussions on astronomy, architecture, engineering, and poetry. He is interested in technological advances or magic that will improve the effectiveness of his new iron weapons. Ramses is also a master propagandist, understanding the value of symbol as well as writing in uniting the populace and assuring immortality.

Ramses III

15TH-LEVEL HUMAN WARRIOR

STRENGTH	18/71
DEXTERITY	16
CONSTITUTION	17
INTELLIGENCE	13
WISDOM	10
CHARISMA	15
AC	2 (0 with *buckler +1*)
HIT POINTS	101
ALIGNMENT	Lawful neutral
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	M (5'11")

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Horseman's Mace, Short Sword (specialized), Shortbow, Spear (specialized), Whip.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind-fighting, Charioteering (18), Endurance (17), Etiquette (15), Riding (Land-based 16).

Appearance: Ramses III is a tall, thin, muscular man with dark skin. His hair is short and black; a braided black beard extends nearly 6 inches from his sharp chin. His eyes are large and brown. He wears gold coin armor and a tall gold crown.

Background: King Ramses III was pharaoh of Egypt in the 20th dynasty (1198–1166 B.C.). The last great pharaoh, Ramses spent most of his reign leading his forces to victory over the many threats to the kingdom. He defeated the Libyans in 1194 B.C., stifling their attempt to conquer Egypt from the west. He decisively defeated the Palestinians and reestablished the flow of tribute to Egypt from that land. Perhaps his greatest victory was against the Sea Peoples.

The Sea Peoples were mainly composed of Achaeans, a western Mediterranean people who ravaged the coastline of the western Mediterranean near Egypt. Their large aggregate fleet spearheaded the attacks along the coastline by invading the seaport towns along the way. These amphibious assaults were followed by land-based attacks by the remainder of the force, which paralleled the fleet the entire length of the way. The land-based force was comprised of the logistical support to the Sea Peoples, including their women and children. The approach of these fearsome people convinced many cultures to succumb to assimilation rather than resist; thus, the numbers of Sea Peoples soared, making them a dangerous foe of Egypt.

In 1190 B.C., the Sea Peoples arrived at the Nile delta intent on invading and settling Lower Egypt. They headed for the harbor without unfurling their sails, prepared to ram and board the Egyptian ships. Ramses III had received precise intelligence from his reconnaissance, however, and he discerned two things about this menacing foe: They were lightly armored, and they had no bows. Therefore, Ramses let his foe enter the harbor unopposed, then sent a squadron of Egyptian galleys to secure the enemy's rear, blocking escape. The enemy continued to advance at full speed toward the Egyptian line until they reached missile range, at which point the Egyptians loosed volley after volley of massed arrows, turning the tide of battle.

While he was unparalleled as a tactician in battle, Ramses could not deal effectively with the administrative affairs of his kingdom and was nearly assassinated toward the end of his reign. In 1166 B.C., Ramses III died and was succeeded by his son, Ramses IV.

Magical Items: Ramses wears *coin armor* +2 enchanted with a mild *chill metal* spell that allows him to patrol the Libyan and Sahara deserts in relative comfort. In combat, he wears a *buckler* +1 on his left arm and wields a *spear* +2 from his chariot; he uses a *shortsword of quickness* +2 as his transition weapon.

Roleplaying Notes: Ramses III is rarely encountered at his capitol, preferring to lead mounted chariot patrols around the kingdom. The citizens of his lawful kingdom are suspicious of armed bands and report them immediately. It is quite possible that Ramses himself investigates the intentions of interlopers should he be nearby. He is willing to listen to reason but is easily provoked into a fight. Not surprisingly, he is quite fond of himself and boldly flaunts the splendors of his kingdom, often commenting on his own divinity.

Wenamon

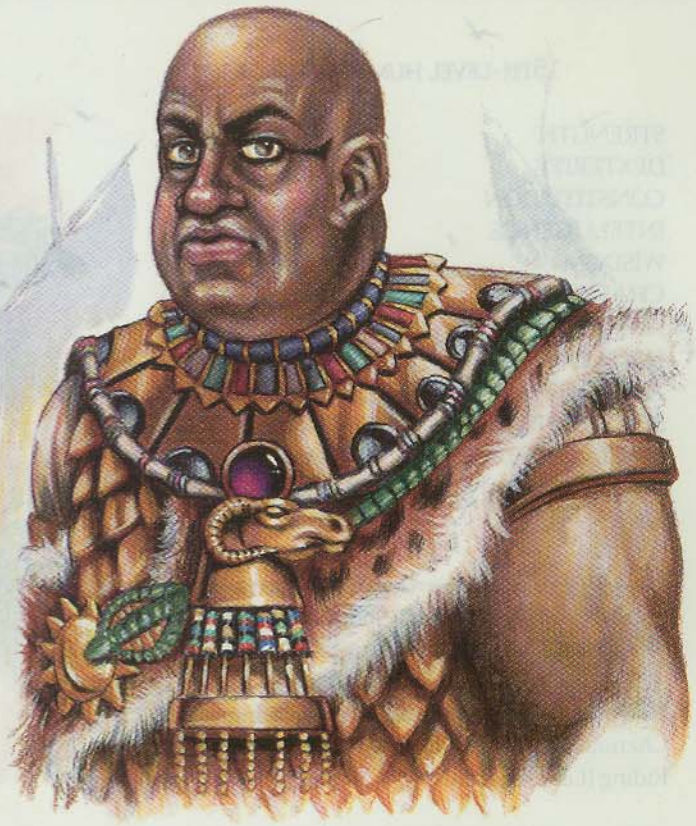
10TH-LEVEL HUMAN PRIEST OF AMON

STRENGTH	13
DEXTERITY	15
CONSTITUTION	15
INTELLIGENCE	16
WISDOM	17
CHARISMA	12
AC	3 (1 with *shield +1*)
HIT POINTS	58
ALIGNMENT	Lawful neutral
SPECIAL ATTACKS	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	M (5'6")

Weapon Proficiencies: Mace, Club.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Astrology (16), Carpentry (13), Etiquette (12), Navigation (14), Reading/Writing (17), Seamanship (16).

Appearance: Wenamon is a short, heavy-set, olive-skinned human with shaved dark hair. His eyes are hazel, and his cheeks and bulbous nose are nearly always flushed.



Background: Wenamon was a high priest of Amon, the supreme God of Egypt during the 20th dynasty (1186–1069 B.C.). He received a mission from the high priest at the temple of Karnak to go to the kingdom of Syria to purchase cedar logs for the construction of the ceremonial barge that would carry a large statue of Amon down the Nile. Wenamon set sail armed with only his faith and a holy symbol of Amon.

The priest stopped at the port of Dor for supplies. The city was inhabited by *tjekers*, better known as the Sea Peoples, or pirates. The city's rogues soon noticed the opulently dressed priest, and one of them relieved him of his money. Not knowing the appearance of the thief, the enraged Wenamon found the nearest well-to-do tjeker and took an equal amount of money from him, saying, "I am keeping your money until you find mine." He then returned to his ship and set sail for his destination.

By the time Wenamon came to the port of Byblos, the harbor master had already received word of his actions at Dor. Fearful of angering the Sea Peoples, the harbormaster ordered the priest to leave. Wenamon exuded divine determination and flatly refused to leave until his hold was full of cedar. Much to the harbormaster's chagrin, the prince of Byblos, Zakar-Baal, arrived on the scene. As much a businessman as a noble, Zakar-Baal welcomed Wenamon, eager to do business.

Several weeks of haggling passed until the priest's ship was loaded with its sacred cedar. On the day of Wenamon's departure, however, the harbor filled with tjeker galleys. Wenamon knelt on the docks and prayed to Amon. The prince apparently saw the light and told the tjeker captain that Wenamon was under his protection. Thus, Wenamon was allowed safe passage out of the harbor but was fair game once his vessel entered the open sea. The galleys pursued Wenamon until a storm sprang up, providing a divine wind that filled the priest's sails and sped him home. Fearing the storm would swamp their galleys, the Sea Peoples broke off pursuit and let the priest escape. Wenamon returned home to write his tale in his log, discovered three thousand years later.

Magical Items: Wenamon wears *scalemail +2* beneath opulent robes, which are clasped over the left breast by a gold *brooch of shielding* that resembles a cobra's head locking into a sun disk. He also has a small *shield +1*. He wields an ordinary footman's mace or a *club +2*. Wenamon's holy symbol grants its bearer a +3 bonus to all saving throws; it can cast *gust of wind* three times per day and *control weather* once per day.

Roleplaying Notes: Wenamon does not oppose other faiths, but he considers Amon the leader of all gods. In a debate about supremacy among the gods, Wenamon brooks no disagreements. Wenamon has major access to the Elemental sphere and minor access to the Healing sphere as well as access to All.

On land, Wenamon has a contingent of war chariots providing escort for his entourage. At sea, the crew doubles as the escorting force. Wenamon is likely to assist an underdog in any dispute, provided the individual's views are not diametrically opposed to the ideals and goals of Amon. Therefore, he can be an unexpected variable in any conflict, abruptly shifting a dispute in the direction he believes Amon would desire.

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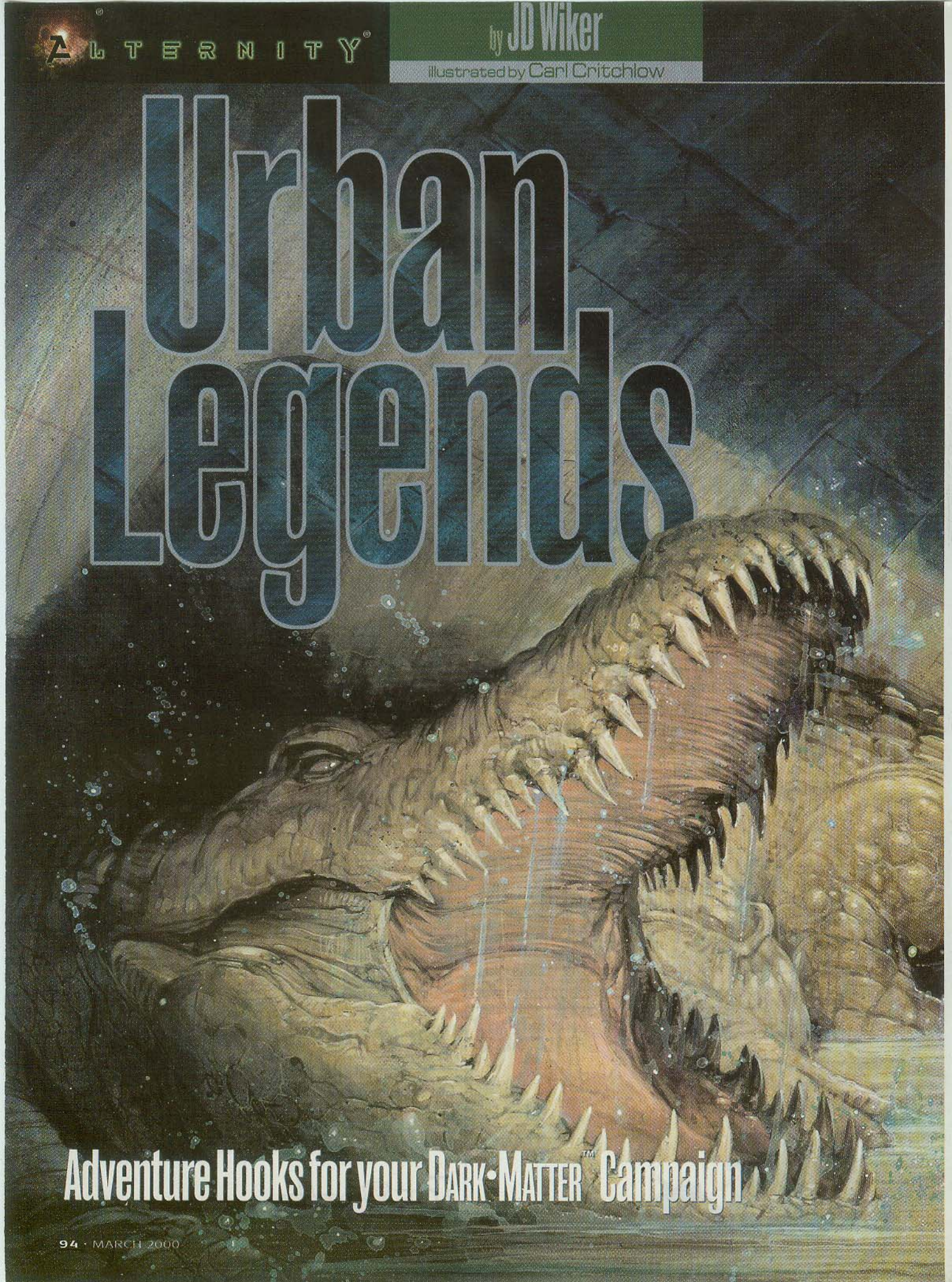
ALTERNITY®

by JD Wiker

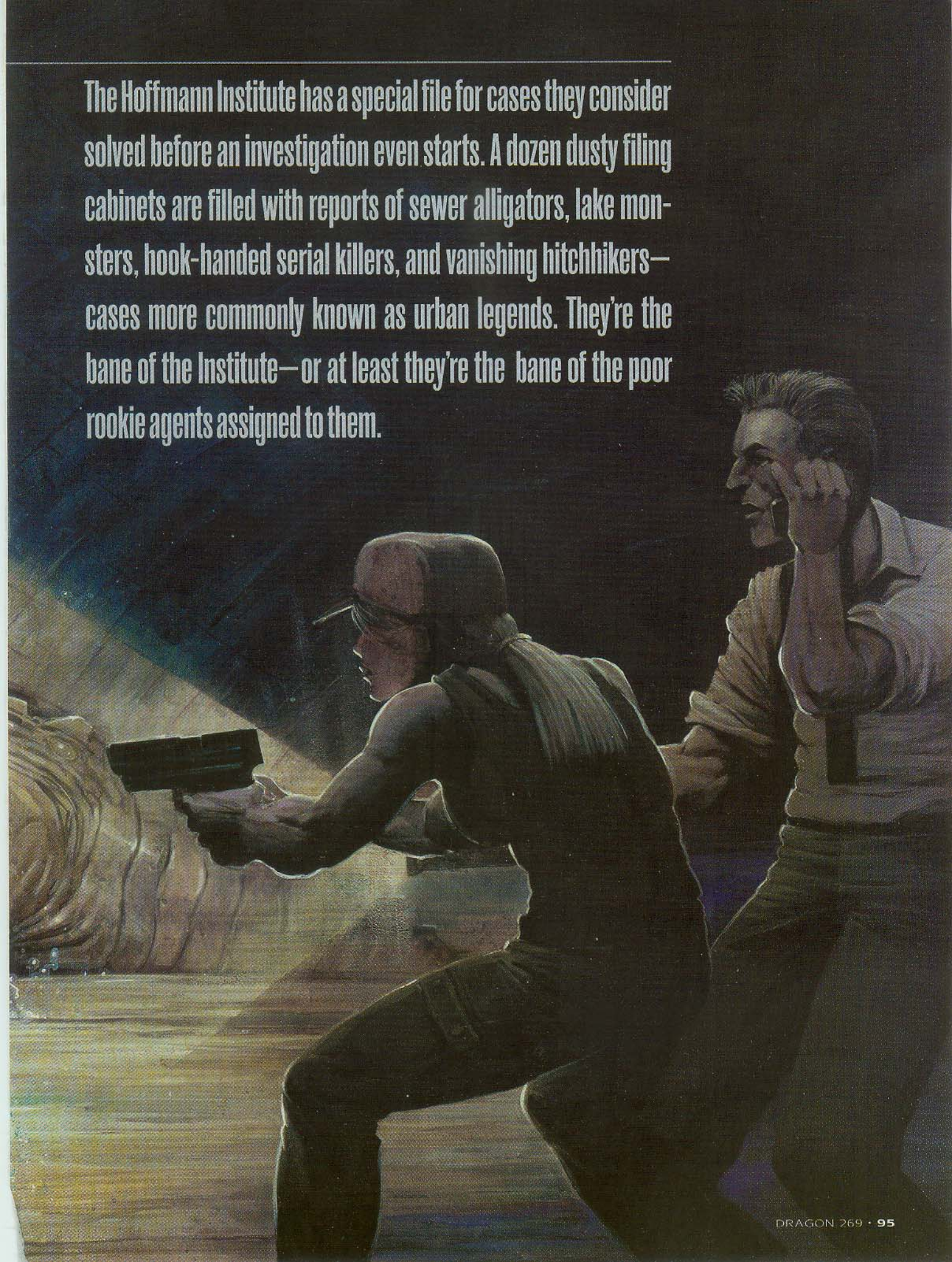
illustrated by Carl Critchlow

Urban Legends



Adventure Hooks for your DARK•MATTER™ Campaign

The Hoffmann Institute has a special file for cases they consider solved before an investigation even starts. A dozen dusty filing cabinets are filled with reports of sewer alligators, lake monsters, hook-handed serial killers, and vanishing hitchhikers—cases more commonly known as urban legends. They're the bane of the Institute—or at least they're the bane of the poor rookie agents assigned to them.



Sewer Alligator

STR	14	(d4+11)	INT	1	(Animal 4 or d4+2)
DEX	9	(d4+6)	WIL	10	(d4+7)
CON	14	(2d4+11)	PER	11	(Animal 5 or d4+3)

Durability: 14/14/7/7
Move: sprint 30, run 20, walk 4, swim 18
Action Check: 12+/11/5/2
#Actions: 3 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite	15/7/3	d4+1w/d6+2w/d4m	LI/O
Tail lash	8/4/2	d4s/d4+2s/d8+1s	LI/O

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
no resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d6+1 (LI), d6–1 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills

Stealth [9]–*hide* [11], sneak [12]; Stamina [14]–*endurance* [16], resist pain [16]; Awareness [10]–*intuition* [12]; Resolve [10]–*physical* [12]]

Despite the high incidence of "reliable witnesses" who turn out to be "the friend of a friend," someone must investigate every report of tarantulas hatching from cactus plants, swarms of wasps nesting in beehive hairdos, and so on. Nearly every case proves to be the product of the overactive imaginations of gullible people who read too many tabloids, and the reports are filed with a thousand nearly identical reports, some dating back 40 years.

Even so, the vast majority of urban legend investigations tend to be so much drudgery; thus, only rookie agents pull the duty. The official line is that reviewing records, interviewing "witnesses," and visiting the scenes of crimes and encounters teaches agents the skills they need to investigate more critical cases. The real story is that no field agent in her right mind enjoys poring over moldering newspaper articles, talking to attention-starved suburbanite housewives, or trudging around in swamps and sewers. It's hardly the glamorous life of an investigator that the Institute's *Annals of Cryptozoology* make it out to be.

But every once in a while, an agent stumbles onto something that turns out to be the real thing—sometimes frighteningly real. The Hoffmann Institute is beginning to notice a pattern to certain types of encounters, a pattern that suggests that some creatures previously attributed to "urban legend" status are actually the new weapons—or worse, new breeds—of old enemies. This development has the Institute just a little worried.

The urban legend files represent confirmed encounters with creatures not human—or no longer human—that Hoffmann agents have discovered hiding behind a veil of modern mythology. The truly chilling thing is that some of them are consciously hiding, using the skepticism of the "intelligentsia" to discredit eyewitnesses and further their own ends—whatever those might be. Most are simply malevolent predators. In either instance, their prey are humans.

Each of the following creatures is based on an urban myth—some new, some very, very old. Gamemasters can use them as examples of ongoing Hoffmann Institute cases, or as "filler adventures" between regular DARK•MATTER sessions. Each creature's entry begins with a kind of eyewitness report and ends with an adventure hook to give the heroes a compelling reason to start an investigation. As with all DARK•MATTER adventures, solving the case should leave a few questions unanswered, giving the heroes a sense that even seemingly unrelated cases might be part of a greater conspiracy.

Alligators in Our Sewers!

"I'll tell ya ... the damn thing was fifty feet long if it was an inch. I saw Ed look at me kinda funny, then he just slipped right under the water, and up this thing came. It just looked at me, with Ed just hangin' in its jaws—still twitchin' a little! Then it went back under and sorta ... swam past me. I tell ya: I ain't messed myself since I was a baby, but I did then. Sewer alligator. You'll never get me back down there. I'm quitting right damn now."

Everyone has heard some variation of the story in which a family, vacationing in Florida, buys a tiny baby alligator to take back home as a pet. But within a few weeks, the little nipper becomes a nuisance, consuming ridiculous amounts of food and, worse, occasionally escaping to scuttle across the bare toes of their hapless owners. So, flush! Into the toilet it goes. Months later, the tiny alligator is a full-sized adult, tired of subsisting on garbage and the occasional rat—and eyeing careless sewer workers as its next meal.

The story is so much nonsense—but the basis is true. Fully grown alligators prowl the sewer systems of larger cities, far outside their natural habitat, devouring cast-off refuse, stray animals, and—every now and again—an unfortunate derelict. Two major operations by sanitation officials—backed with funds from the Hoffmann Institute—have rid New York City of almost three dozen "sewer alligators." But they keep reappearing.

Investigations in New York by Hoffmann agents have revealed that the source of these alligator infestations has nothing to do with humans. Nor are they finding their way in from outside, carried by freighters or La Niña tides. The alligators are coming from unknown locations inside the sewers themselves and apparently breaking through barriers from somewhere deeper in the sewer system. To the Department of Sanitation, this means a nest. To the Hoffmann Institute, this means the kinori.

In point of fact, sewer alligators were originally an attempt by the reptilian kinori to provide a kind of "guard-dog" against further incursions by Hoffmann agents, who had destroyed a major kinori nesting-ground under Manhattan in the 1930s. However, remains found recently in the digestive tracts of some

sewer alligators indicate that their diet consists largely of the kinori themselves.

The obvious conclusion is that the alligators once thought to be so useful to the kinori might have turned on their reptilian cousins, set loose perhaps by some accident unnoticed by humans. Now the alligators prowl at will, growing big and strong on a diet of their erstwhile masters. Another conclusion, though, is that the kinori have a much better handle on the alligators than they want mankind to believe, and that the kinori bodies were only the remains of kinori too old and weak to serve the creatures' society.

At this point, the conclusion of the Hoffmann Institute is that the "sewer 'gators" are real and that their presence likely indicates a hidden enclave of kinori. Whether the alligators are serving the kinori or victimizing them, agents pursuing tales of sewer-dwelling alligators should proceed with caution.

Description: The sewer alligator looks exactly as one would expect: a massive alligator, up to 8 meters long, with a mouth full of wickedly sharp teeth. Closer to the habitats of man they are shorter, forced to subsist mostly on rats and stray animals. But deeper in, closer to the kinori enclaves that spawned them, the sewer alligators grow quite large.

Encounter: Sewer alligators are encountered only in or near sewers and similar public water supplies. Because of their tendency to lie absolutely motionless in or at the edge of the water, waiting for prey, they gain a bonus to their Stealth–*hide* skill check: –2 steps when mostly submerged, –1 step otherwise.

If a sewer alligator manages to inflict Good or Amazing damage on a bite, it has grasped the victim in its jaws. On its next action, it takes the poor creature underwater, where it attempts to "subdue" its prey, gaining a –2 step bonus to subsequent bite attacks on the same victim. The victim can free itself with an opposed Strength feat check, although doing so while holding one's breath confers an automatic +1 step penalty.

Adventure Hook: Rookie agents pursuing an urban legend case enter a sewer to look for alligators. When they finally encounter one, it is attacking a screaming kinori. Shortly thereafter, more kinori arrive, answering the cries for help, and realize that humans have invaded their base. Now the heroes must escape an overwhelming force of reptile-men by working their way back through several kilometers of dark, dank sewer tunnels.

Hook Killer Game Data

STR	14	(+2)	INT	9	(—)
DEX	10	(—)	WIL	14	(+2)
CON	14		PER	7	

Durability: 20/20/10/10
Move: sprint 24, run 16, walk 6
Action Check: 13+/12/6/3
Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Unarmed	18/9/4	d4+2s/d4+3s/d4+4s	LI/O
Claw	20/10/5	d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+2m	LI/O

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
No resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6–1 (En)

Skills

Athletics [14]—*climb* [16]; Melee Weapons [14]—*blade* [20]; Unarmed [14]—*brawl* [18]; Stealth [10]—*shadow* [14], *sneak* [18]; Awareness [14]—*intuition* [16]; Investigate [14]—*track* [20]; Resolve [14]—*physical* [20]

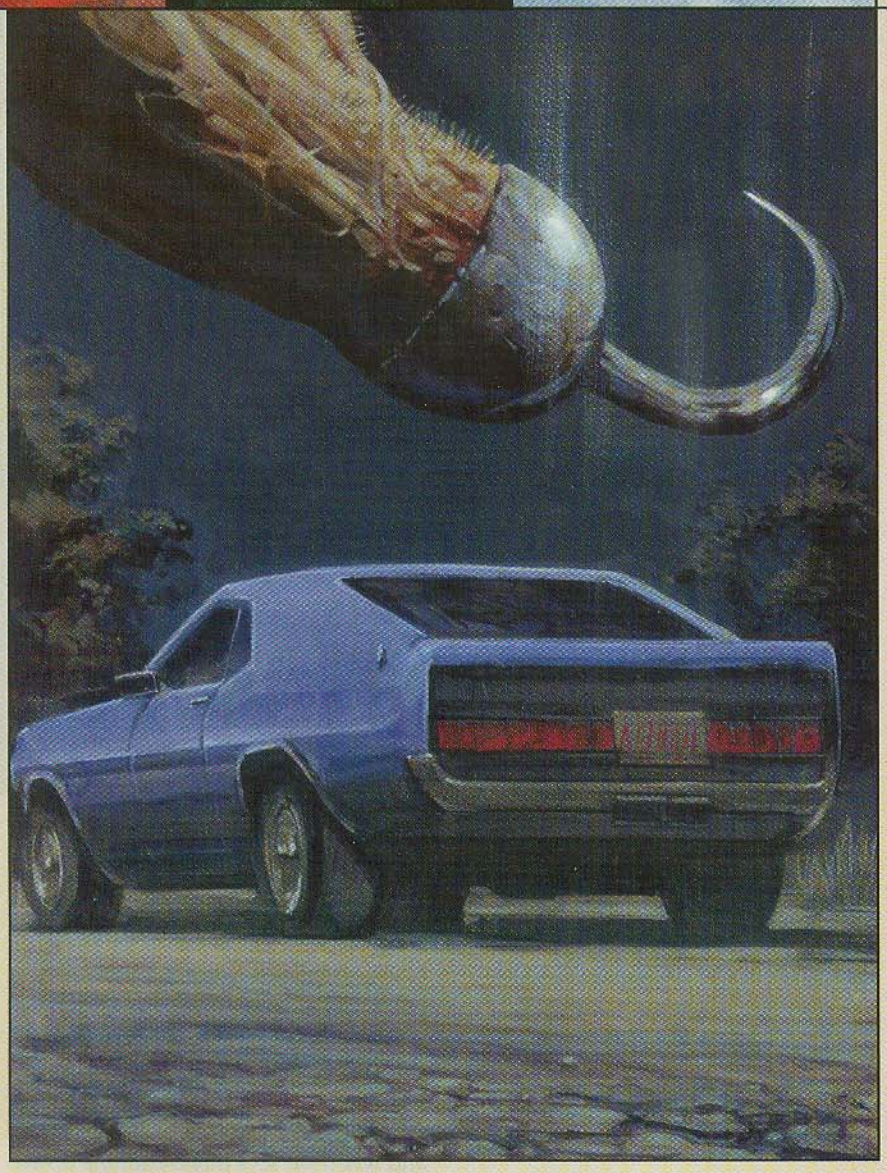
"...And There, On the Door, Was a Hook."

911 — *Please state the nature of your emergency.*
Ms. Stonewell — *Oh my God ... Billy! Billy's dead! I think he's dead!*
911 — *Where is Billy, miss?*
Ms. Stonewell — *He's out ... we were out by the reservoir ... he's in the tree ... I think—oh, God, he was hanging from the tree! I, um, I don't know ...*
911 — *Miss, I need you to tell me what happened.*
Ms. Stonewell — *We were ... um, parked, um ... and we heard this noise, like, um, someone behind the car. And Billy, oh God, he got out, and he said, um, he said it was the psycho—the one on the radio ...*
911 — *On the radio?*
Ms. Stonewall — *Aren't you listening? The guy with the hook!*

One of the most enduring urban legends is the tale of the teenage lovers who park on a lonely country road to make whoopee but who then hear on the radio about an escaped mental patient in the area—a man with a hook for a hand. The young man hears a noise and goes to investigate—but fails to return. Soon, his girlfriend begins to hear a rhythmic scraping noise from the roof of the car, and when she sees blood running down the windshield, she starts the car and drives away in a panic. When she arrives home, her family discovers a bloody hook hanging from the door handle. The police find her boyfriend's disemboweled corpse hanging from a tree over the exact spot where the car was parked.

The basis of the story lies in the public's fear of serial killers (and a rather overblown depiction of the dangers of teenage sex). But despite a lack of verifiable evidence—including the obvious piece, the hook—the Hoffmann Institute has uncovered a pile of unsolved cases involving disembowelments by a weapon judged to be a "hook or similar instrument." None actually involve young lovers on deserted roads but rather a wide variety of circumstances and victims.

These cases appear sporadically over a 50-year period, the first having been



reported in the rural Midwest, the most recent in Sacramento, California. And not a single one has produced a witness, a description of the killer, or even a useful psychological profile. It is as though the killer arises from the collective paranoia of the country and manifests when that paranoia requires approbation. If this is indeed the case, then the killer might not actually be a homicidal maniac but rather an unstoppable phantom, appearing only to those who fear him most.

The Hoffmann Institute is particularly interested in solving this case—or rather, these cases—because unlike most "urban-legends-come-true," this particular monster combines the worst aspects of psychopathic killer and supernatural entity. In effect, this is a killer who can never be caught because he exists only when he is killing.

Description: The hook-handed killer looks more or less like an ordinary human being, though with a frighteningly intense expression and a large, rusted hook screwed directly into the bone, in the place of his right hand. Witnesses often describe the killer as wearing soiled hospital scrubs and a filthy robe, or blue jeans and a grimy denim jacket.

Encounter: Despite being a brutal homicidal maniac, the hook-handed killer is no fool. He appears only in response to the fear of his appearance—not merely to the presence of potential victims. This makes it especially hard to set a trap; if the victim isn't genuinely in dread of the killer, the killer does not show.

The killer vanishes after he has killed, or been killed, and always in an "impossible" fashion. His trail simply ends, for example, or his body vanishes when no one is looking directly at it. Sometime later, the hook-handed killer returns, elsewhere, to claim a new victim.

Adventure Hook: The heroes are contacted by a Hoffmann analyst who tells them of the hook killer legend and that he has discovered a pattern to the appearances of the killer. The pattern leads to an appearance in their area, coincidentally at a time when the area will be full of teenagers (prom night, homecoming, spring break, or the like). The only way to be certain the killer does not strike is to shut down the event—which, of course, rankles the teen population. The heroes are then faced with a dilemma: They can try to curtail the night-time activities of hundreds of young adults without a reasonable explanation, or they can tell them the truth—and possibly awaken the fear that summons the killer. While they deliberate, is the killer ignoring the teens to strike at a completely different target?

The Gods Are Angry

"Now what we have over here, Lieutenant, is one Mrs. Rita Nicholas. No children, separated. Um ... sorry. I mean, she and her husband are separated; it's obvious that she's ... um. Well, you know what I mean. Anyway, Mrs. Nicholas was waiting for him—her estranged husband—to give him a present. Something she picked up in Brazil. Don't know where that is. The present, I mean. I thought it might be with the husband, but we won't know that until the forensics guys get him out of the ... um, the oven.

"I gotta tell you, Lieutenant: nights like this, I'm glad I didn't make detective."

A common modern legend based on the unfortunate conjunction of archaeological treasure-seeking, pulp adventure stories, and Hollywood B-movies concerns the acquisition of an artifact from the ruins of a lost civilization. The story goes that the explorer discovers an item—usually an idol—and desires to take it away with him. The locals warn that the ancient gods will be angry, that the "plunderer" risks their wrath. The warning is ignored, the idol is carried back to "civilization," and the new owner suffers a mysterious and gruesome death.

But trifling with ancient civilizations, at

least where the Hoffmann Institute is concerned, does not equal an untimely and macabre demise. In fact, despite being asked to investigate scores of mysterious antediluvian artifacts found at murder scenes, the Institute has never found connecting archaeological relics with what inevitably prove to be perfectly ordinary homicide cases. Further, the Hoffmann Institute has actually begun to suspect that some private collectors manufacture tales of horrible curses to convince the Institute to research the origins of their artifacts free of charge.

The Hoffmann Institute would dearly love to close the file on these cases, but reports of ancient curses continue to arise year after year. Agents investigate and spend countless hours translating ancient inscriptions, unearthing forgotten references, even traveling to remote locations, only to turn up absolutely nothing. In fact, the only common thread is the perfectly innocuous nature of the artifacts. The owners aren't turning up dead or even vanishing mysteriously. The idols don't get up and stalk people with stray cutlery. Their eyes don't so much as follow people as they move about the room. Their only activity appears to be the assiduous collection of dust.

One aberration appears in the file, however. The Institute has only in the last few months noticed a connection between several as-yet-unsolved murder cases: stolen archaeological artifacts. The cases, some dating back several decades, had previously been classified as burglaries gone bad; the assumption was that the deceased stumbled upon thieves ransacking his house and was murdered. Careful scrutiny of the police reports, however, turned up only one item missing in each and every case: a small, stone idol of an Aztec deity. There is no description of the item more complete than that—because no one has seen it except the murdered owners—and, presumably, the thieves who stole it. Still, the Institute is convinced it's the same idol each time.

Description: The idol in question is a representation of Imxictl, a forgotten deity that predates the Aztecs by centuries. It is made of granite, stands approximately 35 centimeters tall, and weighs about 10 kg. Though the figure wears a feathered headdress and carries what appears to be a drum, it has no recognizable weapons. Its eyes are made of turquoise, the only spots of color on the entire idol.

Encounter: The idol finds its way into the homes of its victims usually via purchase at a second-hand store, where it was sold as a curious if somewhat tacky knick-knack. Placed in the new owner's home, it merely waits, quietly observing the behavior of its owner. Then, when its owner commits an action that the idol perceives as a sin of some kind, it acts. First it isolates its owner (disconnecting telephone lines, locking doors and windows), then it arms itself with whatever weapons it can carry. Finally, it proceeds to stalk the hapless victim in a home that has now become a deathtrap.

Adventure Hook: The idol begins making the rounds through a series of dealers in antiquities. As each of the dealers turns up dead in some mysterious and macabre fashion, the police notice the pattern and ask the Hoffmann Institute for a copy of their "cursed idol" file. The Institute agrees, but only if the heroes are allowed to participate in the investigation. As the heroes begin to follow the trail of the murderous idol, they discover that each of the idol's victims had purchased it from the same pawnbroker: an unscrupulous fence of stolen goods, who coincidentally subscribes to an ancient, pre-Columbian religion.

Angry Idol Game Data

STR	8	(d4+6)	INT	12	(Animal 15 or d6+11)
DEX	12	(d4+9)	WIL	14	(d4+12)
CON	12	(d4+10)	PER	2	(Animal 5 or d4+2)

Durability: 12/12/6/6
Move: run 18, walk 12
Action Check: 13+/12/6/3
#Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite	10/5/2	d4s/d4+1s/d4w	LI/O

Defenses

no resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d4 (LI), d4–2 (HI), d4–1 (En)

Skills

Melee [8]; Stealth [12]—*hide* [14], *sneak* [14]; Stamina [12]—*resist pain* [14]; Awareness [14]—*perception* [16]; Resolve [14]—*physical* [15]

The Legend of Blackwater Swamp

"Sure, I'll tell ya about the Creature.

"I ain't never seen it myself, but I swear I heared it a time 'r twice. It's got this sorta deep, grumbly noise it makes, like a cougar in a real bad mood. But it ain't no cougar. I seen folks pulled outta the swamp missin' they whole head. Not ate off, not sliced off like a

knife. I mean pulled off. Like if I was to put one foot on your shoulder and pull real hard on your chin. But I mean real hard, see?

"What's that? No, I ain't got no earthly idea why it'd want just their heads. Maybe it collects 'em. Or maybe it only eats the brains. Search me. I ain't the Creature—y'know what I mean?"

If one were to take every account of mysterious ripples, bubbles, or shapes in the water seriously, then there would have to be at least one aquatic monster in every lake, stream, or pond in North America. Legends in this country alone date back centuries, to well before the first Europeans set foot on the continent.

The stories can involve just about any body of water, but the most enduring ones revolve around remote or largely unmapped swamps or marshes—places where as-yet-undiscovered species seem considerably more likely. As always, the least element of possibility is all it takes for a tale to advance from rumor to accepted fact.

Only the most dedicated outdoorsmen among Hoffmann Institute agents enjoy assignments to track reports of bog monsters. Faced with a choice between slogging through decades of fetid muck and mire, or sifting through a similar amount of hall of records documents, most agents will happily choose the latter. At least searching every inch of a library is likely to turn up something—and the mosquitoes aren't nearly so bad.

Unfortunately for most agents, the Hoffmann Institute is all too aware that there is a wide variety of monsters roaming our world—and some of them could dwell in swamps. Perhaps the Greys have misplaced an armodont, or maybe the kinori have unleashed some horrible new beast. Or maybe a sasquatch has gotten lost and strayed into a marsh, where it finds itself unable to depart without attracting attention. So the Institute must investigate, just in case the report has some foundation in truth—though in 50 years of swamp expeditions, only once did the agents find something. (And that turned out to be a sasquatch that had already starved to death by the time they found it!)

These missions are so unpopular among Hoffmann agents that the Institute has turned them into a kind of administrative punishment. Agents who have behaved recklessly on other cases are assigned to "Bog Hunt" duty, with the intent of making them appreciate the luxuries available to them while on ordinary cases—luxuries like fresh food, laundry facilities, running water, and indoor toilets.

Description: The average bog monster is a dark, warty bcreature resembling a furless bear. It has webbed, four-fingered hands in place of claws, however, with similarly amphibian feet. The bog monster's teeth are short but sharp, and plentiful. It stands approximately 2.5 meters tall and weighs in the vicinity of 800 kg.

Encounter: The bog monster generally hunts in the waters of its wetland home, lying mostly submerged as it scans above and below the surface for prey. Although it usually shuns contact with humans, it has no compunctions about attacking anything that comes too close. Its tactics are brutal but effective: It tears the victim's limbs from their sockets until the victim stops moving. (Incidences of heads having been pulled off

are actually quite rare, despite being a popular theme in the legends.) The monster generally hurls the pieces away, unless it happens to be terrifically hungry. Otherwise, it eats only fish, snakes, and the occasional stray sheep or goat.

Adventure Hook: If the heroes have recently drawn the attention of another organization—or worse, the media—the Hoffmann Institute reassigns them to "Bog Hunt" duty to let them "lie low" for a while. During a search of the remote Blackwater Swamp, they discover the dismembered remains of a hunter who has clearly been pulled apart by something extremely strong. Unfortunately for the heroes, the starving bog monster has devoured parts of the poor hunter and has now acquired a taste for human flesh. Unless they locate and dispatch it quickly, it begins stalking them, seeking another meal. If they should prove too much for it to handle, it starts making forays outside the swamp, into nearby camping grounds, at the height of tourist season.

Bog Monster Game Data

STR	18	(d4+16)	INT	4	(Animal 7 or d4+4)
DEX	8	(d4+5)	WIL	10	(d6+6)
CON	18	(d6+14)	PER	8	(Animal 10 or d4+8)

Durability: 18/18/9/9
Move: sprint 26, run 16, walk 6, swim 6
Action Check: 13+/12/6/3
Actions: 3 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2

Attacks

Bite	12/6/3	d4+1w/d4+2w/d6w	LI/O
Tear	14/7/3	d4+2w/d6w/d4m	LI/O

Defenses

+4 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: d6–1 (LI), d6–1 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills

Stamina [18]—*endurance* [20], *resist pain* [20]; Stealth [8]; Awareness [10]—*intuition* [12]

Like Father, Like Son

"No, I will not calm down! I am his mother and I know that … thing *in there is not my Andrew! I don't know if he—he might have never been my son! Don't you see? I have to kill him! He's not human! He's something evil! A monster! I'm warning you: Just stay away from me! Don't make me shoot you, too!"*

The feeling that one's children are of a completely different species is such an ageless motif that one finds references to the "generation gap" in the writings of Socrates. The inability to relate to one's own children was so prevalent in the Dark Ages that tales arose of faerie children being left in the place of human ones. In some cases, an illness or injury results in a radical personality shift, but in most instances, the problem is simply a failure to communicate.

Today, psychologists work long hours trying to help adults and children reconcile their differences. Some families might never learn to identify with one another, but talk of faerie children is a thing of the past—mostly. Not all people accept such utilitarian psychological buzz-words like "phobia" and "disorder." Some cling to the notion that alien creatures mate with human women to produce "changelings"—offspring that appear human but who in truth are just as alien as their fathers. The possibility is whispered from mother to daughter, doctor to nurse, father to therapist. It is perhaps the quietest of the new millennium's urban legends—for what mother wants to accuse her own child of not being human and risk spending years in an asylum?

Lately, a surprising number of families undergoing group therapy for just such relationship problems are turning up dead, every family member a victim of apparent spree killings—all but one. A pubescent son is always discovered missing and presumed abducted by the killers. The fact that none of these children has ever been found, living or dead, tells the police that they are being murdered at secondary crime scenes that simply have yet to be discovered. However, those who know of the changeling legend merely nod grimly, knowing full well that the shy, intelligent boy is even now selecting his next victims, disguised as a loving wife's amorous husband.

The Hoffmann Institute is slowly compiling a growing list of changeling cases but has yet to form a working theory of the crimes. Evidence has been difficult to assemble; the incidents still appear to have more to do with child abductions and multiple homicides than they do with anything paranormal. Local law enforcement is notoriously uncooperative when Hoffmann agents suggest that the murderer might have been the missing child, that the child was not actually abducted but rather left the scene after removing all evidence of its supernatural origin.

The Institute realizes just how delicate these particular investigations are. How does one suggest that a child is not only *not* his father's son but also a supernatural serial rapist and murderer in the making? A great many families ignore the advice of the agents until it is too late, and the Hoffmann Institute is left trying to guess where the changeling might have gone—if not back home, wherever that might actually be.

Description: Although a changeling can disguise itself as an ordinary human child, its true form is unearthly. A coat of short, pale fur covers its entire body, lengthening and rising to a point on its head. Its ears are long and pointed as well, and its mouth is filled with a double row of short, needlelike teeth. If not for the look of evil intelligence in its narrow, bright eyes, the changeling might be taken for a particularly large, if diabolical, monkey.

Encounter: Once a changeling child has integrated into a human family, it

Changeling Game Data

STR	8	(d4+5)	INT	8	(d4+6)
DEX	10	(d4+8)	WIL	12	(d4+10)
CON	10	(d4+8)	PER	14	(d6+10)

Durability: 10/10/5/5
Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4
Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Actions: 2 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2
FX energy points: 10

Attacks

Unarmed 10/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Defenses

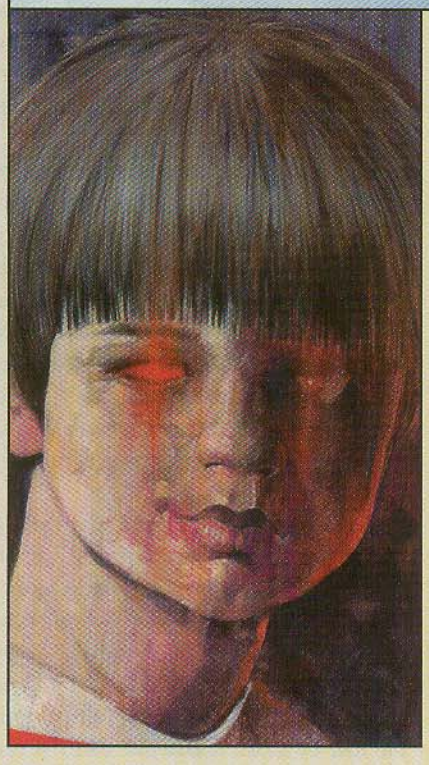
No resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
No resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks
Armor: none

Skills

Athletics [8]; Stamina [10]–*endurance* [11]; Stealth [10]–*sneak* [12]; Knowledge [8]; Animal Handling [12]; Awareness [12]; Resolve [12]; Deception [14]; Interaction [14]–*charm* [16]

FX Skills

Arcane Magic (shamanism)–*animal voice* [16], *hunter's stare* [16], *spirit of the beast* [18], *venom spirit* [15]

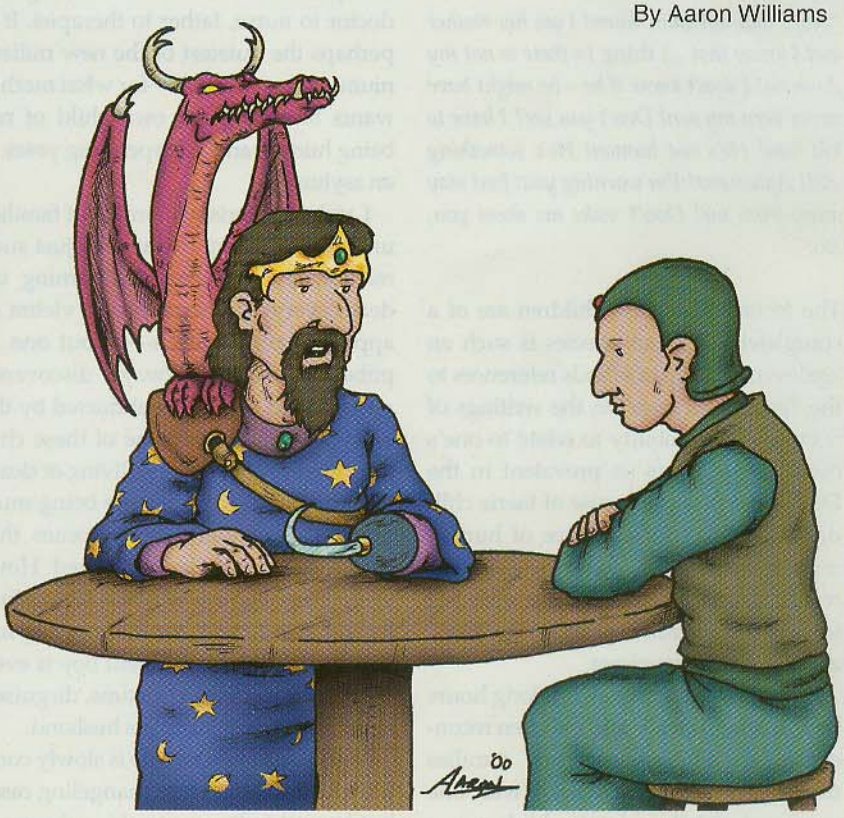


lives its life more or less as one would expect of an ordinary human child. It goes through infancy, the toddler years, and even school without ever giving any indication that it is anything other than what it appears to be. Certainly, the child tends toward a quiet disposition and even seems shy. It is only when it reaches adolescence that the changeling's true nature becomes so strong that it can no longer hide its otherworldly origin. When that time comes, its erstwhile family falls to its bloodlust, one by one.

Adventure Hook: The heroes are asked to investigate the suspicious death of a teenage girl. The devastated family has another child, a ten-year-old boy of unusual intellect and extraordinary shyness. The heroes soon learn that the boy—the only witness to his sister's death by drowning—might be not entirely human. He is, of course, a changeling, who has been forced to kill his sister earlier than expected because she guessed the truth about him. But now, with the investigators getting close, the boy decides to finish off the rest of his family early.

JD Wiker is hard at work modifying his car to use a jet engine for propulsion. Tests are scheduled to begin this summer in the New Mexico desert.

By Aaron Williams

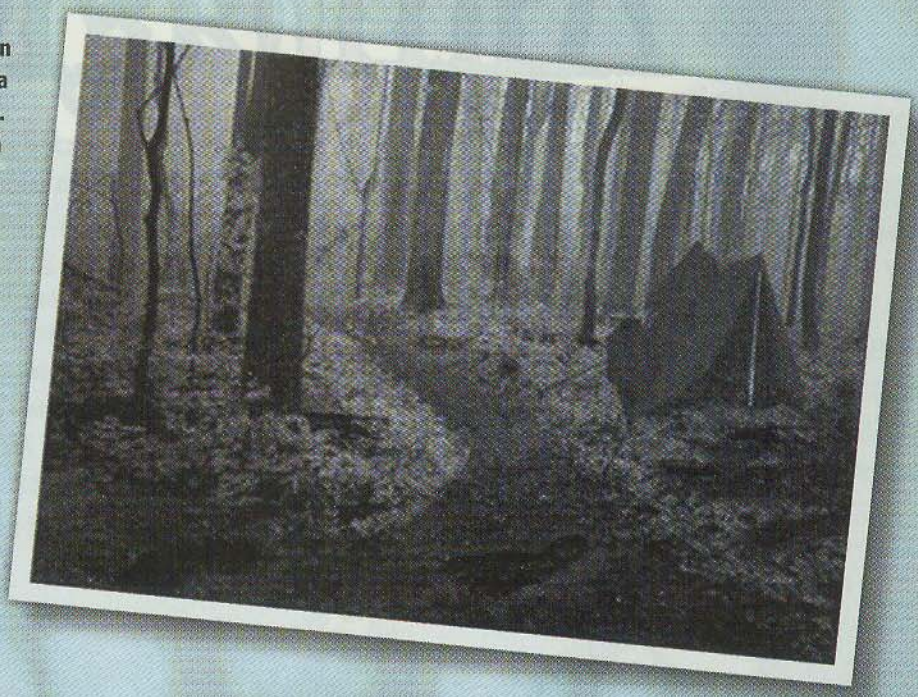


"How should I know if he's finger–tame?
I tried to find out five times and gave up."

TRANSMISSIONS

By Andy Collins, JD Wiker, and Jeff "Zippy" Quick

Gamemaster Hints



This photo was picked up by the Hoffmann Institute off a wire service as part of a report of "animal attacks" in the Mt. Rainier National Forest in Washington State. According to the piece, three separate campsites have been attacked in the past month. No injuries are reported. In each case, the campers had a good scare but didn't actually see the animals responsible.

A wild sasquatch is responsible for the attacks, but his motives are anything but murderous. The sasquatch's mate is pregnant and close to delivery, and he seeks to prevent anyone from venturing too close to their cave lair. Investigators might run into other interested parties (such as a team hired by the Center for Xenological Studies) and ultimately encounter the sasquatch themselves. A hero with Medical Science or Knowledge–*first aid* might aid in the delivery!

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Gamemaster Hints

A planet with large, mobile, carnivorous plants is an adventure unto itself. Use the "Primate" statistics in the ALTERNITY *Gamemaster Guide* (substitute "bite" for all other attacks), or look inside the *ALTERNITY ALIEN COMPENDIUM® II* accessory for commensurate creatures. Potential story elements include:

- Feeding the evidence to a carnivorous plant would be the perfect cover-up for a murder.
- Most people believe Shamondendra to be roughly as intelligent as dogs. Some could be smarter.
- Political dissidents might use the symbolism of the celebration to launch another coup.
- Brave or foolhardy heroes might enjoy a recreational fling in a Shamondendra running, protein tosses for distance, or other physically challenging "fun" activities, without any extra danger or subplots.

"Animagic"

Whether it's a wizard's toad familiar, a ranger's bear companion, or a gnome's groundhog associate, animal companions play vital roles in most AD&D® campaigns. And just like characters, some animal companions have access to magical items that enhance their natural abilities, endow them with new powers, or afford some kind of protection.

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We accept postcard submissions only. One winning entry will be selected based on originality, novelty, and game appropriateness. All entries must be received by May 26, 2000. The contest winner will receive a $100 prize package of new Wizards of the Coast® roleplaying game products!

"Animagic" Contest Rules

1. Entry: To enter, send a postcard including your name, address, phone number, and your idea ("Entry") to *Dragon Magazine* "Animagic" Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many postcards as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same Entry more than once. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), May 26, 2000. One winning Entry will be selected by a team of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ("WotC") judges based on the Entry's originality and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. Originality of Entry: Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify WotC against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on WotC's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. Use and Ownership of Entry Info: In consideration for WotC's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in entry to WotC and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of WotC. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to WotC. WotC shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. Prizes: The winning Entrant of the "Animagic" Contest shall receive a $100 prize package of roleplaying game products.

5. Eligibility: Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign WotC's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. WotC assumes no responsibility for, late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of Wizards of the Coast, Inc., Hasbro, and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of WotC, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to *Dragon Magazine* "Animagic" Contest Winners, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by June 30, 2000. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

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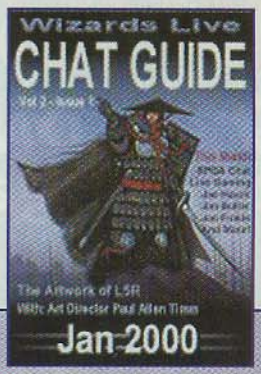
Online Gaming Programs



Master Schedule

Day	Time	Show	Guest
Sat. 3/4	6–7 P.M.	Special: Designer Interview	Andy Collins & Sean Reynolds
Sat. 3/4	8:55 P.M.	Totally Twisted Trivia	n/a
Sun. 3/5	6–7 P.M.	From the Dragon's Mouth	Dave Gross & Chris Perkins
Tues. 3/7	6–7 P.M.	RPGA Tonight	Robert Wiese
Fri. 3/10	6–7 P.M.	TCG Hour	Ed Bolme & Mindy Sherwood-Lewis
Sun. 3/12	6–7 P.M.	Designer's Guild	Bob Watts
Fri. 3/17	6–7 P.M.	RPG Hour	Monte Cook
Sun. 3/19	6–7 P.M.	Industry Edge	Sue McNab & John Bianchi
Tues. 3/21	6–7 P.M.	RPGA Tonight	Robert Wiese
Fri. 3/24	6–7 P.M.	TCG Hour	Joe Hauck
Sat. 3/25	8:55 P.M.	Totally Twisted Trivia	n/a
Sun. 3/26	6–7 P.M.	Sage Advice Live!	Skip Williams
Tues. 3/28	6–7 P.M.	Wizards Profiles	Elaine Cunningham
Fri. 3/31	6–7 P.M.	Special: Conventions	Susan Scheid & Pamela Mohan

All times are Pacific Standard Time.

Special: Designer Interview

ALTERNITY® Game: *Beyond Science: A Guide To FX*

Designer Sean Reynolds discusses how *Beyond Science: A Guide To FX*, an ALTERNITY rules expansion, allows Gamemasters more variety in campaigns. Lead editor Andy Collins helped develop the new FX system used in both *Beyond Science* and the DARK•MATTER™ campaign setting. March 4, 6:00 P.M.

Totally Twisted Trivia

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RPGA Tonight

Join top members of the RPGA® Network for a discussion of the latest Network events. March 7, 6:00 P.M. and March 21, 6:00 P.M.

andfather's Jaw
5
Reaction: Immediately after another player plays
Action card, bow Grandfather's Jaw and add
ndfather's Jaw to your hand. Until the turn ends,
Grandfather's Jaw becomes an exact copy
of the Action card.
"We were born from blood, and to blood we shall return."
—Grandfather's last words

TCG Hour

L5R: *Fire and Shadow* and Empire League

Brand Manager Ed Bolme and Events Coordinator Mindy Sherwood-Lewis talk about the newest L5R expansion, *Fire and Shadow*, plus how your local game store can sign-up for the new Empire League. March 10, 6:00 P.M.

Designer's Guild

Roleplaying Miniatures

Talk with the force behind the new line of D&D miniatures, Bob Watts. March 12, 6:00 P.M.

RPG Hour

The Rogues of 3rd Edition D&D

Monte Cook, 3rd Edition D&D designer and author of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* gives the scoop about the new role of rogues. March 17, 6:00 P.M.

Industry Edge

Work at Wizards

You don't have to be an artist or game designer to work at Wizards of the Coast. Head of Human Resources Sue McNab and recruiter John Bianchi will answer your questions on how to make yourself an attractive job candidate to a gaming company. March 19, 6:00 P.M.

TCG Hour

Joe Speaks

Joe Hauck, the official spokesman of the MAGIC: THE GATHERING® trading card game, opens the floor monthly for discussion. March 24, 6:00 P.M.

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Wizards Profiles

FORGOTTEN REALMS®: *The Magehound*

Author of the popular FORGOTTEN REALMS Songs and Swords series, Elaine Cunningham, forges into the unexplored territory of Halruaa with her latest novel, *The Magehound*. March 28, 6:00 P.M.

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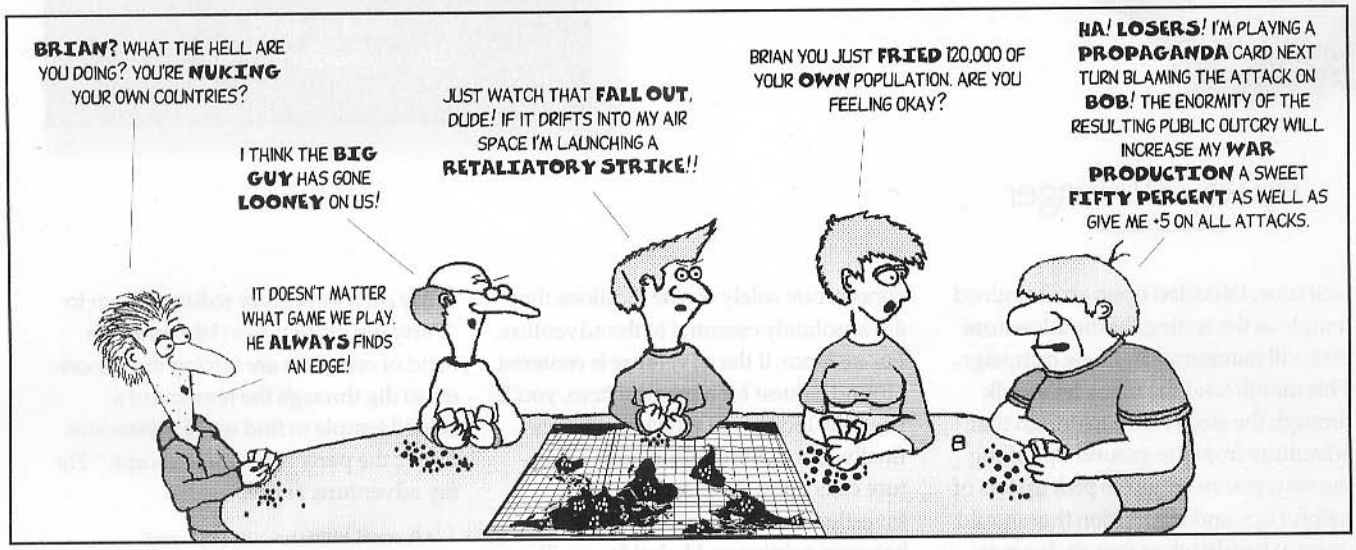
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IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT GAME WE PLAY. HE ALWAYS FINDS AN EDGE!
JUST WATCH THAT FALL OUT, DUDE! IF IT DRIFTS INTO MY AIR SPACE I'M LAUNCHING A RETALIATORY STRIKE!!
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HA! LOSERS! I'M PLAYING A PROPAGANDA CARD NEXT TURN BLAMING THE ATTACK ON BOB! THE ENORMITY OF THE RESULTING PUBLIC OUTCRY WILL INCREASE MY WAR PRODUCTION A SWEET FIFTY PERCENT AS WELL AS GIVE ME +5 ON ALL ATTACKS.

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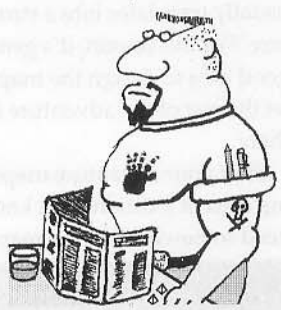

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Dungeoncraft

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By Ray Winninger

Last time, I decided upon an old ruined temple as the setting for the adventure that will inaugurate my new campaign. This month (and the next), let's walk through the steps I took to design that adventure from the ground up. Along the way, you're bound to pick up lots of helpful tips and inspiration that should come in handy when you sit down to design your own adventures.

Remember that my opening adventure, "The Scar," will be presented in its entirety in our sister publication, *Dungeon® Adventures* (issue #80). This column and the next might prove more useful if you pick up a copy of *Dungeon Adventures*, read the adventure, and follow along.

First Things First

Last issue, I fleshed out the basic concept of the temple adventure and spent some time devising a backstory. With these two preliminaries out of the way, the next step is to start thinking about the map. Since the essence of the AD&D® game is exploration, a particularly strong map (and all it implies) usually translates into a strong adventure. For this reason, it's generally a good idea to design the map first and let the rest of the adventure flow from there.

Start your adventure maps by making a list of locations you know you'll need somewhere on the map. For now, concentrate solely on the locations that are absolutely essential to the adventure. For instance, if the adventure is centered around a quest for a magical item, you'll need the location in which the item is finally found. Similarly, if your adventure calls upon the player heroes to investigate an underground war between goblins and kobolds, you'll probably need several areas housing the two combatant tribes.

The best way to guarantee that you've correctly identified all your requirements is to mentally strip your adventure down to its barest elements so you can make sure to account for all these elements when you draw your map. For instance, "Party enters ruined stronghold looking for fabled magic sword; party discovers that a tribe of hill giants has established a lair in the stronghold; leader of the giants uses the magic sword as a table knife, unaware of its value." Or, "Party enters dungeon to rescue a princess kidnapped by an evil cult; princess faked the kidnapping and is actually the cult's leader; she and her followers hoped the ruse would lead her father's champions (the party) into a trap." In the former case, your map would need quarters for the hill giants, especially the king's kitchen (where the sword is found). In the latter case, you'd need one or more areas that make up the cultists' trap.

My own adventure reduces down to "Party begins as prison laborers for a band of orcs; orcs are forcing the prisoners to dig through the remains of a ruined temple to find some mysterious object; the party is trying to escape." For my adventure, I need:

- **A semi-hidden vault (the orcs believe their quarry is located in one of the temple vaults).**
- **Some rubble-strewn work areas the orcs' prisoners must dig through to reach the vault and the orcs' prize.**
- **Prisoner confinement areas and barracks for the orcs (both improvised atop the temple's original facilities).**

Since escaping from the orcs and the temple is the main objective of my adventure, I'll also need to include a number of possible escape routes on the map. In an earlier installment, I noted that it's a good idea to include alternative approaches to overcoming an adventure's obstacles whenever possible. Since the escape is such an important goal in this adventure, I'm especially determined to provide the players with a good set of multiple choices. Therefore, in addition to the obvious main entrance, I've decided that there are a few hearths in the temple featuring chimneys that stretch up and out of the complex. Later on, to make the players' choice of routes more interesting, I'll try to position the chimneys such that each offers its own unique challenge.

Catch up on past installments of Dungeoncraft.
http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp

Scouting the Locations

Once you've identified all your needs, the next step is to expand the list to include locations you'll want to place on the map. For me, this is usually a two-step process. First, I try to look at the setting from a logical perspective and ask myself what sort of locations should be present. The notion of a ruined temple, for instance, implies that some of the rooms in the complex once served as shrines, meditation chambers, and quarters for the priests and their servants. Similarly, logic dictates that if the temple once served as a living area, its inhabitants needed access to food, water, and other basic necessities, leading me to place ruined kitchens, pantries, and water storage areas on my list. Because my backstory states that the temple was originally constructed as a sort of citadel to house an important artifact, it also seems logical that warriors or guardians (paladins, in this case) were quartered in the temple alongside the priests.

After I finish examining the setting from a logical perspective, I round out my list of "wants" by looking at the map from a playability standpoint. Here, my goal is to come up with a few locations that will be fun for the players to explore—something different and unique. As I finally draw my map, I'll attempt to scatter rooms like these among the more mundane locales I've already identified. When designing this first adventure, I drew my inspiration for these locations from a number of sources: a book on ancient Mayan temples, a couple of classic "prison break" movies, fairy tales, and—of course—my own imagination.

At this stage, I also flip through the *Monstrous Compendium®* books and their various supplements to start thinking about the sort of creatures I'll call upon to populate the map. Although it's unnecessary to draw up an exhaustive list of occupants at this point, some monsters have special requirements for their lairs that I'll need to take into account when drawing the map. In this case, I decided that large spiders, stirges, and wild dogs are ideally suited to inhabit the temple ruins alongside the orcs.

By the time I finished assembling my list of "wants," it looked something like this:

- **Priest & Paladin Quarters:** These areas aren't very exciting, but they're necessary. I decided that the orcs probably set up most of their new makeshift barracks within the old priest and paladin quarters.

- **Armory:** The presence of an armory follows logically from the presence of the paladins and the temple's original mission. Perhaps the orcs who currently inhabit the ruins still use the old armory. Obviously, anyone looking to escape from the complex would find this area of interest.

- **Food and Water Stores:** Again, such areas are necessary but not very exciting. Flipping through the book on ancient Mayan temples gave me an interesting idea for the water storage facility, though. The Mayans devised a system by which rainwater would pass through a sieve in the ceilings of some of their temples, where it would be collected into large vats and used as drinking water. Building such a system into my temple would not only explain where the original inhabitants found their drinking water but also provide the PCs with yet another interesting escape route. After all, the sieve in the ceiling would be very old and brittle by now. If the PCs could break it out, they might be able to climb up the shaft and out of the complex.

- **Fungus Garden:** I decided that it might be interesting if the temple inhabitants supplemented their food supply with various mushrooms grown in the complex itself. Today, the old fungus garden is wild and overgrown. Among the mushrooms that grow there are a couple of poisonous varieties. If the PCs can somehow identify and retrieve the poisonous mushrooms, they might play an interesting role in the escape.

- **Wine Cellar:** This is yet another chamber that is logically present. At first, I thought that it too might not be terribly interesting, but then I had an idea. I decided that the cellar was well stocked when the orcs arrived; ever since, the orcs have been unable to resist dipping into its stores. Each night, one or more casks of wine are removed from the cellar and opened, touching off an enormous revelry. The fact that most of the orcs are intoxicated almost every night should make it easier for the PCs to explore the complex and make their escape plans. Should the PCs find the poison mushrooms in the fungus garden, they might easily escape by adding the mushrooms to the wine and poisoning most of the orcs in the complex in one fell swoop.

- **Meditation Chambers:** More necessary rooms.

- **Main Temple:** I decided that I might spice up this room a bit by granting a mysterious (and helpful) vision to any cleric character who entered the main temple. At this point, I wasn't sure how the vision would help, though I had a vague notion that I wanted the players to interpret the vision as evidence that the goddess of the temple was subtly intervening to facilitate their escape. It seemed to me that this mysterious assistance might make an interesting "loose end" that I could pick up later in the campaign. Perhaps the players will eventually learn that the goddess helped them escape from the complex because she has some sort of grand destiny in mind for them.

- **Punishment Hole:** The idea for this location came from the classic "prison break" movies. I decided that the orcs needed some sort of "solitary confinement" chamber in which they could dump unruly prisoners. Eventually, I'd invent game mechanics that would help figure out what happens to any character unfortunate enough to be placed here.

- **Scripture Room:** One of the biggest challenges in designing this particular adventure was making sure that are enough clues scattered around the complex to make sure that the PCs have an opportunity to discover everything they need

to know about the temple to form an effective escape plan. I was particularly interested in including a room that acted as a repository for various scriptures and records because I felt it would be a great place to stuff some more clues.

• **Key Room:** While trying to invent a few more interesting locales I hit upon the idea of including a room that contained hundreds of different keys of all descriptions. Perhaps the key was an important religious symbol to the priests who constructed the temple, and the faithful were instructed to collect keys whenever possible. I could then hide a single useful key in the room among all the useless specimens. After I had the idea for the key room, I quickly decided that the clerical "vision" in the Main Temple might reveal the one useful key.

• **Cisternary:** My original concept for this room was a simple repository for holy waters and oils. Later though, while attempting to make some of the locales more interesting, I decided that the special holy water housed here might serve as a makeshift potion of *healing*. The makeshift potions could serve as yet more evidence that the goddess was subtly assisting the escaping party.

• **Hall of Statues:** I saw this room as a hall of statues honoring famous heroes who helped build the temple. Later, I decided that one of the statues was armed with a weapon that might be removed and used by the PCs.

• **Wizard's Lab:** I decided to include a wizard's lab in the complex after I realized that one or more of the imprisoned PCs are bound to be wizards and unable to contribute much to the escape effort until they can locate spell books, material components, and so forth. Adding the lab gave me the opportunity to place a few of these items in an area where the PCs might discover them.

• **Spider and Stirge Lairs:** The need for these rooms sprang out of my quick perusal of the *Monstrous Compendium* pages. I felt it was important to include a few monsters other than orcs in the adventure to break up the monotony. Of course, I'll have to position these monster lairs such that they don't pose a real threat to the orcs; the orcs would have dealt with any obvious threats shortly after they arrived. I quickly decided that the stirges might inhabit one of the hearth chimneys, posing an interesting problem to any PCs attempting to escape through that particular chimney. At this point, I had no idea where to place the spiders.

• **Monster maze:** This was another idea that was inspired by the prison break movies. I felt the orcs needed some kind of ultimate punishment to bestow upon unruly prisoners who couldn't be controlled any other way. Feeding the troublemakers to an unusually scary monster seemed ideal. I quickly decided that the monster would inhabit one discreet wing of the complex; the orcs kept it pent up there by building large fires the beast was afraid to cross. This provided a couple of interesting opportunities. Escaping PCs might find a way to extinguish the fires, allowing the beast to run rampant through the complex and effectively distracting the orcs. At the same time, placing one of the hearth chimneys inside the monster's wing would not only give the players hoping to escape plenty to think about but also guarantee a chance at survival for any unfortunate PC whom the orcs fed to the beast. Ultimately, I decided that the pent-up monster was an owlbear, but I also decided it would be more interesting if no one in the complex had actually seen the creature at the time the adventure opens, leaving the beast's true identity a mystery.

• **Blocked Areas:** Early on, I decided that some parts of the temple complex would be completely blocked off by rubble. The idea here is to allow the DM to revisit the complex later, if he so chooses, to conduct even more adventures. After the players get a little money, for instance, it's not too difficult to imagine them deciding to hire some laborers and return to the complex, hoping to find out what lies in some of the hidden areas.

Dear Dungeoncraft

Dear Dungeoncraft,
I took your recent suggestion and finally read J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. You were right! It contained lots of great ideas for my AD&D campaign. Now I'm hungry for more. Are there any similar books you can recommend?

Waiting in Williamsburg

Dear Waiting,
You bet there are plenty of similar books I can recommend. The best place to start is with the books that Gary Gygax cites as the works that inspired him. After Tolkien, your next logical stop is Robert E. Howard's Conan series. Unfortunately, Howard's own Conan stories (much better than his imitators, in my opinion) are now all out-of-print, but you can often locate the appropriate paperbacks in used bookstores. Conan is a quick-witted barbarian who begins life as lowly thief and ultimately rises up to become ruler of an entire nation—a very typical, AD&D trajectory.

After Conan, check out Michael Moorcock's Elric series, all of which are still easily available. Elric is a powerful hero who gets caught up in an epic struggle between the forces of law and chaos. His exploits, in part, served as the inspiration for the AD&D game's alignment system.

Later on, check out the Fritz Leiber's Lankhmar series (still in print from White Wolf publishing), Jack Vance's The Dying Earth, *T.H. White's* The Once and Future King, *and Ursula K. LeGuin's* Earthsea trilogy.

Drawing the Map

Once the list of locations is complete, it's time to start drawing the actual map. Begin by deciding upon a couple of basic parameters. How large do you expect the map to be? How many "dungeon levels" will it cover? And, what (if anything) serves as a main entrance?

In my case, I decided that my map would consist of a single level that should cover roughly one sheet of graph paper with fairly small squares. As a general rule of thumb, you can assume that each full page of dungeon maps that are part of your adventure translates into approximately two game sessions of playing time. Two evenings sounded just about right for what I was trying to

accomplish. My main entrance, I decided, would consist of a long staircase descending down into the very center of the complex.

When drawing dungeon maps, I always start by lightly sketching a very general outline on the graph paper. In this case, I noticed that most of the locations I identified fit into four general categories: priest quarters, temple rooms, special areas (the key room, paladin quarters, and wizard labs), and the monster maze. I drew a rough box the approximate size of the complex centered around my main entrance, divided the box into four quadrants and lightly labeled each to correspond to one of the location categories. I decided the monster maze would occupy the northwest quadrant of the complex, the temple areas would occupy the northeast, the special rooms the southwest, and the priest quarters the southeast. I then lightly penciled in the names of all the locations I identified in the exact areas in which I wanted to place them on the map.

With this guide in place, it was then a simple matter to sketch out the temple's various rooms and corridors. I placed all the locations I'd already identified in the rooms that ended up closest to the locations I'd already sketched out for them. By the time I was finished, of course, the map contained more rooms than I could match to my list of locations. To decide what to do with these "extra" rooms, I was forced to double and triple up a few general locations like the priest quarters and meditation chambers. I also thought up a few more locations to occupy some of the gaps, a process that was a lot easier now that there was an actual plan for the complex in front of me.

You can see the final results of my mapmaking in *Dungeon Adventures*.

That wraps up another installment. Join me here in thirty days for our third descent into the dungeon and more notes on the construction of the adventure.

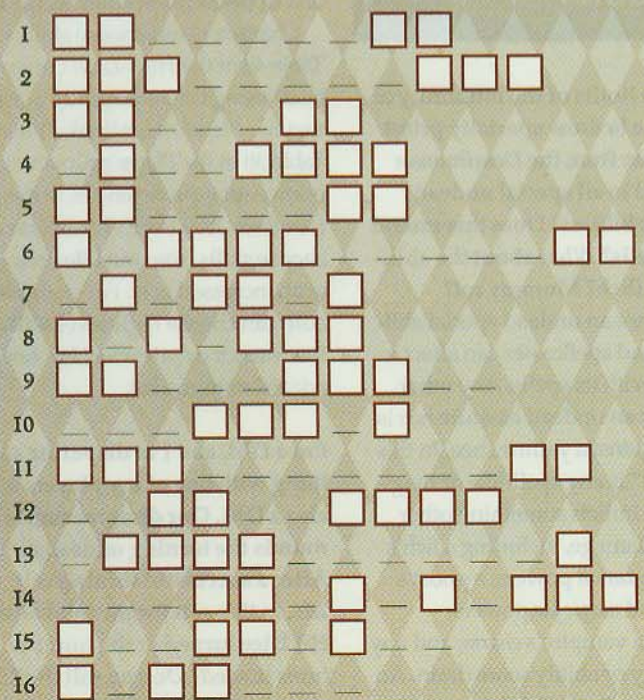
Ray Winninger is an author, game designer, and corporate overseer. This is his fifteenth installment of Dungeoncraft, and he's running out of clever things to write in his bio.

MIND FLAYERS

no. 10

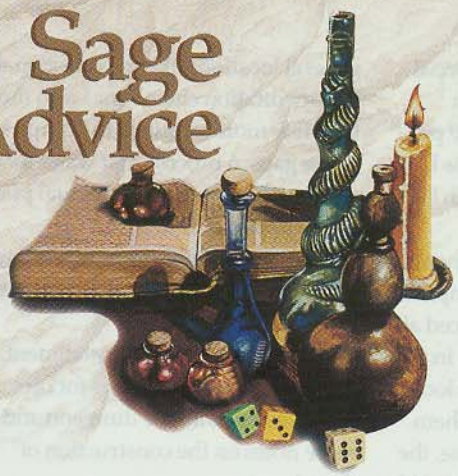
by Mike Selinker

A good weaponsmith knows that, to make a quality weapon, you need quality parts. Each entry is a weapon found in the *Player's Handbook*. The clue on the right refers to the word that is entered in the squares of that entry. After you've entered the word in the squares, you can figure out what weapon can be made by filling in the blanks.



1 Titled high-level fighter
2 It goes between bricks
3 Brain-busting
4 Picture addition puzzle
5 Bird like a raven
6 What a paladin stands for
7 Emulate a cleric, perhaps
8 Identical
9 Pair up, or an incendiary device
10 Polyhedra
11 Drink, as a potion
12 Chant
13 Look forward to
14 Suffering on the waves
15 Sound this weapon makes
16 A projectile weapon, like this one

Sage Advice



By Skip Williams

This month, the Sage considers various optional rules for the AD&D® game and looks into a few magical particulars.

Delvesonns (dwarf specialty priests of Dumathoin from the *Demihuman Deities* book) can use the *identify* spell at will; however, their description says nothing about the loss of Constitution casting an *identify* spell usually imposes. If delvesonns do suffer the Constitution loss, that would seem to severely limit the ability to cast *identify* at will. We found an example in the *Faiths & Avatars* book that does not lose Constitution (specialty priests of Azuth), but in that case the description specifically says that their *identify* power does not cause Constitution loss. So, do delvesonns lose Constitution when they use their *identify* ability?

Delvesonns do lose Constitution when using their *identify* granted power. It is only a temporary loss. (See the spell description.) Although a delvesonn technically has unlimited use of the *identify* spell, the character's Constitution score sets a practical limit to the power's use.

In general, creatures cannot escape the penalties associated with casting a particular spell unless there is a rule that specially exempts them (as is the case with specialty priests of Azuth).

Will a *knock* spell unclasp a buckle or other fastening on a saddle?

A *knock* spell opens any closure that fits within the spell's size limit. (See spell description.) If a *knock* spell is directed at a creature's equipment, allow the creature a saving throw vs. spell to negate the effect.

Will a *knock* spell unclasp a buckle or other fastening on a saddle?

What are the limits of the immunity of a yathrinshee (a drow specialty priest of Kiaransalee from the *Demihuman Deities* book) to all special undead powers and abilities? Does this extend to a lich's spells? What about the abilities of a demilich? Mummy rot?

Spells are not an undead special ability; any undead spellcaster can affect a yathrinshee with its spells. Any other special attack an undead creature has is ineffective against a yathrinshee. In this case, "special" is any spell-like or magical effect that inflicts something other than simple damage, including a lich's *fear* and *paralyzation* powers; a ghost's *fear*, aging, and *magic jar* powers; mummy rot; a vampire's *charm*; and any kind of energy or ability score drain. An undead creature's special defenses are not affected.

When a 1st-level thief character has a negative score in a thieving skill, does she have to raise that score to a positive number when she gains 2nd level?

No. A thief of any level can have a negative score in a thief skill. The character cannot use a thief skill unless her score in that skill is greater than 0.

When choosing skills for high-level characters from the *High-Level Campaigns* book, can characters choose proficiencies from crossover groups? For example, can a paladin choose the priest's Eminence skill? The opening text in the skills section seems to say no.

Characters can choose skills from Table 40 in the *High-Level Campaigns* book using the same group crossovers that the *Player's Handbook* allows. (See Table 38 in the *Player's Handbook*.) Unlike nonweapon proficiencies in the *Player's Handbook*, however, characters cannot choose skills from outside their groups at an increased cost. For example, a paladin can choose high-level skills from the warrior or priest list, but not from the wizard or rogue list.

I'm a DM, and I'm disputing something with one of my players who is also a DM. Our disagreement surrounds the turning undead ability. After a successful turning roll, you roll 2d6. Is this roll for the total number of Hit Dice turned or the number of creatures turned? Do you roll the 2d6 once for the whole turning attempt, or once for each type of undead creature

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present? If not, how do you handle mixed groups of undead? What happens when some of the undead are turned or destroyed automatically? What happens when you have a mixed group of undead and some of them are weak enough that an extra 2d4 creatures are affected?

First, in your campaign, you make the call, no matter how your players choose to do things when they run their own campaigns.

You roll your 2d6 only once per encounter (because each priest or paladin can only make one turning attempt during each encounter), and then only if the initial 1d20 roll is high enough to succeed. If there is a mixed group of undead, the weakest undead are affected first. Among undead of the same Hit Dice, the undead closest to the caster are affected first. Note that it is possible to affect some undead in a mixed group and not others. For example, a 6th-level cleric encounters six shadows and two wraiths, all moving single file down a corridor toward the cleric. One wraith is in the lead, followed by the six shadows, with the second wraith bringing up the rear. The cleric rolls 1d20 and gets a 10, which is high enough to affect the shadows but not the wraiths. The cleric rolls 2d6 and gets a 5. Neither wraith is affected because the turning roll was not high enough. The five shadows closest to the cleric are turned, leaving the last shadow unaffected. On the following round, another 6th-level cleric steps up and tries a turning roll. He gets a 20, but the 2d6 roll is only a 2. The remaining shadow is turned (because the weakest creatures are affected first). The wraith closest to the cleric is also turned, leaving the second wraith unaffected.

A mixed group of undead that contains creatures the priest or paladin can turn or destroy automatically is handled in the same way, except that some creatures will be affected no matter what the initial 1d20 roll is. Apply any automatic turning or destruction before determining if any other creatures are affected. If the priest or paladin can destroy extra creatures, roll 2d4 first and destroy all those creatures first. For example a 13th-level cleric encounters 2 spectres, 6 wraiths, and 8 shadows. The cleric automatically destroys the shadows (blasting an extra 2d4 of them), automatically turns the wraiths, and needs a turning roll of 4 to turn the spectres. The cleric rolls 1d20 and gets a 1. The cleric still can affect 2d6 of the wraiths and shadows, and destroys an extra 2d4 shadows to boot. The cleric rolls 2d4 first; the cleric rolls a 5 and destroys five shadows. Now the cleric rolls 2d6 and gets a 7; this destroys the remaining shadow and turns all 6 wraiths.

Skills & Powers Solutions

Using the *Player's Option*®: *Combat & Tactics* rules, do characters who have grand mastery with a missile weapon receive an additional attack per round with that weapon? Other than an additional attack per round, are there any benefits to grand mastery with a missile weapon?

Grand mastery with a missile weapon grants the character an extra attack each round, a damage increase, and bigger knockdown die as explained on page 76 of *Combat & Tactics*.

If a group is using the *Skills & Powers* rules and wants to also use *Combat & Tactics* rules, can other warriors besides fighters take high and grand mastery? If so, can nonwarriors take them also? *Combat & Tactics* is quite clear that only single-classed warriors can become high and grand masters; however, page 74 of the *Skills & Powers* book talks about some flexibility.

Pages 118 and 119 in the *Skills & Powers* book discuss weapon mastery. If you're using the *Skills & Powers* and *Combat & Tactics* rules together, use the *C&T* rules for the effects of weapon mastery, but use the *S&P* rules for determining who can learn mastery. (Table 54 in *S&P* gives character point costs.) Only single-classed fighters can become high masters or grand masters. (See next question.)

What level to you have to be to achieve the various levels of weapon mastery?

That depends on the character's class and which rules you're using. (See the previous question.) Here are the minimum levels, assuming that you're using the expanded access to mastery the *Skills & Powers* book allows:

Master	**5th level (fighter)**
	7th (ranger, paladin, multiclassed fighter)
	8th (cleric)
	9th (thief)
	10th (wizard)
High Master*	**5th level (fighter)**
Grand Master*	**9th level (fighter)**

*Only fighters can become high masters or grand masters.

How do you figure out the chance of spell failure for a character using the dragon sage kit from the Council of Wyrms™ setting? The book says the failure chance is based on the character's Wisdom score plus 15%, which implies that the higher the character's Wisdom score the higher the chance for failure. To make matters worse, the example in the book says that a dragon sage with a Wisdom score of 18 has a 15% chance for failure. Help!

Use the Chance of Spell Failure column from Table 5: Wisdom in the *Player's Handbook*, and add 15% to whatever value is listed there. For example, a character with a Wisdom score of 18 has a spell failure chance of 0, +15% equals 15%.

The material in the *Skills & Powers* book on multi-class characters has me confused. It says the character points for each class must be spent on that class's list of abilities. I understand that this is to keep a thief/mage from buying one thief skill and spending all the other points on mage abilities, but what about nonweapon proficiencies? If one

of my players has a thief/mage with 5 CPs left over from the thief class and 16 from the mage class, can those be spent on nonweapon proficiencies or just the class abilities? The letter-of-the-law seems to say just class abilities, but was that the intent?

The player can "spend" points from either or both class's allotments of CPs by saving them for use at a later step (such as the nonweapon proficiency step). If the player is creating a demihuman character, she can save only 5 CPs. In this case, the player could save all 5 extra CPs from her thief allotment, but then she would have to spend or discard the 16 extra CPs on mage class skills or else lose them. The player could save 5 of her 16 extra mage CPs, but she would have to spend her remaining 11 mage CPs on mage class skills or discard them. She also would have to spend the remaining 5 thief CPs on thief class skills or discard them. She also could save a few CPs from each class, so long as she saves only 5 in total. Then she must spend the remainder from each class appropriately or discard them.

Can a priest cast spells while wearing *gauntlets of ogre power*?

A friend of mine stumbled over the following phrase in the *Monstrous Manual*™ tome: "Cyclops can hurl boulders up to 150 yards away, inflicting 410 points of damage." I'm sure that others have asked the question before, but what would the real damage be? 4d10 or 4–10 (2d4+2)? My research regarding the damage was unsuccessful, although I looked for older stats in other books.

You are the first to ask. The damage is 4d10; the ultimate source is the original *Deities and Demigods* book.

When dealing with a creature or character who is only surprised on a 1 and another creature that surprises on a 1–5, how do you determine surprise?

If you're playing the AD&D 2nd Edition game, nobody is surprised only on a 1 and nobody surprises on a 1–5, though you might encounter these wordings from time to time as erroneous holdovers from the original AD&D game.

The phrase "surprised only on a 1" should be replaced by "add two to your surprise rolls."

The phrase "surprises on a 1–5" should be replaced by "subtract two from opponents' surprise rolls."

When creatures or characters roll for surprise, just apply all the appropriate modifiers. In this case, the modifiers cancel each other.

Can the 2nd-level priest spell *heat metal* make metal hot enough to melt? If not, can it at least heat it to a point where it is glowing and malleable so that the spell could be used in place of a forge for a blacksmith?

No, in both cases. The *heat metal* spell makes the recipient metal searing hot, like a stove, not forge hot.

What is the maximum number of spells a wizard can memorize per spell level? (For example, how many 1st-level spells can a wizard hold in memory?) Is the maximum nine spells per spell level? Or do bonus spells, such as those given to specialist wizards, allow a wizard to memorize more than nine spells of a particular level?

No, nine spells is not the limit. Use whatever number appears on the spell table for the wizard's level, then add any bonus spells that the wizard might be entitled to. This holds true for other spellcasters as well.

If you were to throw a *shield of missile attraction* out into the middle of a battlefield, would it attract all the missile fire, or does someone have to hold onto it for the missile attraction to work?

An unattended *shield of missile attraction* does not attract missiles; the *shield's* missile attraction power works only when someone actually tries to use the shield to fend off a missile attack. Even if somebody uses the *shield*, it still doesn't suck missiles toward the user, it just makes the user easier to hit with missile attacks.

The description for the berserker class's bear form in the *Vikings Campaign Sourcebook* does not mention the character not being able to berserk in bear form. The wolf form does not allow the fighting frenzy, but can it be initiated in bear form?

All the limits of wolf form (no speech, no Strength bonus, no berserking, and so on) apply to the bear form as well as the wolf form.

Can a priest cast spells while wearing *gauntlets of ogre power*?

Yes. Neither armor nor armor-like magical items interfere with a priest's spellcasting.

The *Spells & Magic* book has a rule (on page 79) that allows a wizard to cast a spell for greater effect by increasing the number of spell points allocated to the spell. Could a priest do this too? If so, what would be the effect of casting *cure light wounds* spell this way? Would the spell heal extra damage?

Although the text mentions only wizards' casting spells for greater effect, there's no reason why priests can't use it, too. However, "overcharging" only increases a spell's level-dependent variables (by increasing the spell's casting level). A *cure light wounds* spell doesn't have any level-dependent variables.

The rules say that a multiclassed character always uses the best saving throw table from among all of the character's classes. How do I decide which table is best? Say I have an fighter/wizard who is 8th level in each class. The wizard table would give the character a decent saving throw against spells, but against breath weapons the fighter table would be better.

There is no need to decide which table is "best." The character takes the saving throw table for each class and uses the lowest available saving throw number for each category. The character in your example would use the wizard saving throw vs. spell and the fighter saving throw vs. breath weapons.

Do *boots of speed* double the rate of all forms of movement afoot (that is, a thief moving silently, ranger tracking, withdrawing from combat, and so on) or just running speed? Can the increased speed be "turned off" without actually removing the *boots*? The *boots* grant an Armor Class bonus under certain conditions. What are these conditions?

The *boots* give their wearer a land movement speed of 24 (no matter what the wearer's land speed without the *boots*). Anything special the wearer does to move over land is calculated from a base of 24. Note, however, that using the *boots* tires the wearer, even if the conditions allow for less than full speed. For example, if the wearer's movement rate is reduced to ½ because he or she is tracking, the *boots* still allow movement at a rate of 6 (¼ of 24); however, the wearer still must rest after an hour because he or she is using the *boots* to increase speed.

The wearer can choose not to use the speed boost and still keep the *boots* on.

Any condition that allows the wearer to use a Dexterity bonus to AC also allows the AC bonus from the *boots*.

If a wizard casts *clairvoyance* to see what's on the other side of a door, can she center a spell on the other side of the door?

No, at least not without opening the door first. *Clairvoyance* is one of the few spells in the game that does not require an unbroken line between the caster and the target, but using a *clairvoyance* spell does not negate that requirement for other spells.

My friends and I recently played the old module *The Tree of Life*. We found an item called *oil of sunlight*. What does this item do? We can't find a description of it anywhere.

Oil of sunlight is briefly described on page 146 of the *D&D® Rules Cyclopedia*, though no game effects are listed. Essentially it's sunlight in liquid form. It comes in 1-ounce bottles that glow as brightly as candles. I suggest that creatures susceptible to sunlight (such as vampires) suffer 8d6 points of damage if doused with the stuff. Your DM might come up with additional uses for the oil. For example, one bottle could be used to anoint the leaves on one Medium-size plant. The treatment lasts 24 hours, and the plant functions as if bathed in pure sunlight for the whole time.

There's a subrace of gnolls called flinds; how do you pronounce the name flind?

Everyone I know pronounces it so that it rhymes with "wind."

What happens when a character wielding a *vorpal sword* attacks a foe wearing a *cloak of displacement* and rolls a natural 20? Would the attack cut off the opponent's head?

If the sword wielder is attacking the cloak wearer for the first time in an encounter, the attack misses thanks to the power of the *cloak*. The attack roll of 20 is sufficient to sever the defender's head, but the attack must hit before it can sever.

***The Complete Priest's Handbook* allows you to create clerics and priests who draw their powers from a force or philosophy. How do you run such characters in a PLANESCAPE® campaign, in which is it sometimes necessary to know the home plane of a cleric's or priest's deity?**

The DM has to choose a home plane for the philosophy or force. I suggest using the character's alignment as a guide. For example, a chaotic good cleric of war probably draws power from Ysgard. You also could assume that all forces or philosophies come from a single plane, most likely the Prime Material Plane.

Skip Williams admits that he's used the potted plant gambit himself, but only in conjunction with a plant growth *spell or a magical item that creates a full-size plant.*

Tricky Entanglements

How immobilized are characters who are subjected to an *entangle* spell? Are they helpless or capable of defending themselves? Are the effects similar to a *hold person* spell? Will an *entangle* spell trip a charging horse, slow it down, or just stop it? If a horse is *entangled*, is its rider also *entangled*?

"Sage Advice" has dealt with this question before. Here's some updated advice on the effects of the spell: Creatures who fail their saving throws against an *entangle* spell can't move or use Dexterity bonuses to Armor Class. They otherwise defend themselves normally. *Entangled* creatures can attack anything they can reach without moving, but suffer a –2 attack penalty. They cannot cast spells that have material or somatic components.

A charging horse, or any other charging creature, will stop if it fails its saving throw or slow down to half speed if its saving throw is successful. The spell effect breaks the charge; the charging creature gets none of the benefits or penalties from charging.

When a mount and rider are affected by the spell, I recommend that you make one saving throw for a mount and its rider, using the rider's save or the mount's, whichever is better.

Our enterprising priest wants to take a potted plant with him into caverns so he always has the ability to cast an *entangle* spell. If the roots are not anchored to the earth, what are the results of the *entangle* spell?

Nothing, except perhaps that the plant grabs and holds onto anything that comes near it. The effect will be something like having a whole lot of prickers stuck to one's clothing—annoying, but hardly debilitating.

In general, a plant or group of plants will need to occupy a space at least 5' wide, 5' long, and 1' high before it can effectively entangle a creature. (Good luck getting an effective *entangle* effect out of a closely trimmed putting green.) Smaller amounts of plant life might be effective in other circumstances, such as when the targets are very small or larger targets are caught lying down.

Role Models

For You To Find Out

By Dave Gross & Chris Perkins

Photos by Craig Cudohufsky
Miniatures painted by Jason Soles

The DM always knows more than the players about an encounter. This is true even when everyone can look at the same drawing on a vinyl mat or—if you're lucky enough to use sculpted terrain—the same three-dimensional room.

By showing a visual representation of your dungeon rooms, you can give the players a lot to think about without giving away all your secrets. In fact, if you show the players good but subtle clues, they'll be all the more satisfied when they discover these secrets—and they'll see how fair it was when they don't.

One of the best ways to challenge your players without making them feel cheated is to give them plenty to look at. The average gamer's imagination provides so many distractions that even a room everyone can see is still challenging. The trick is to give them both clues and red herrings, then let them decide which ones indicate real danger.

Keep Them Guessing

Using the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® miniatures, we sent our heroes into the crypt of a long-buried warlord. With a barbarian, an elven thief, and a cleric, we had a reasonably well-rounded if small band of adventurers.

To give the players plenty of visual distractions, we set up a dungeon using the MASTER MAZE™ gear, especially the Wicked Additions set (for stairs, pillars, and a demon arch) and the Deluxe Room set (for secret doors and smoking torches), creating a crypt antechamber with plenty of surprises for the unwary, but also plenty of cool details that didn't necessarily mean danger but which were sure to draw attention.

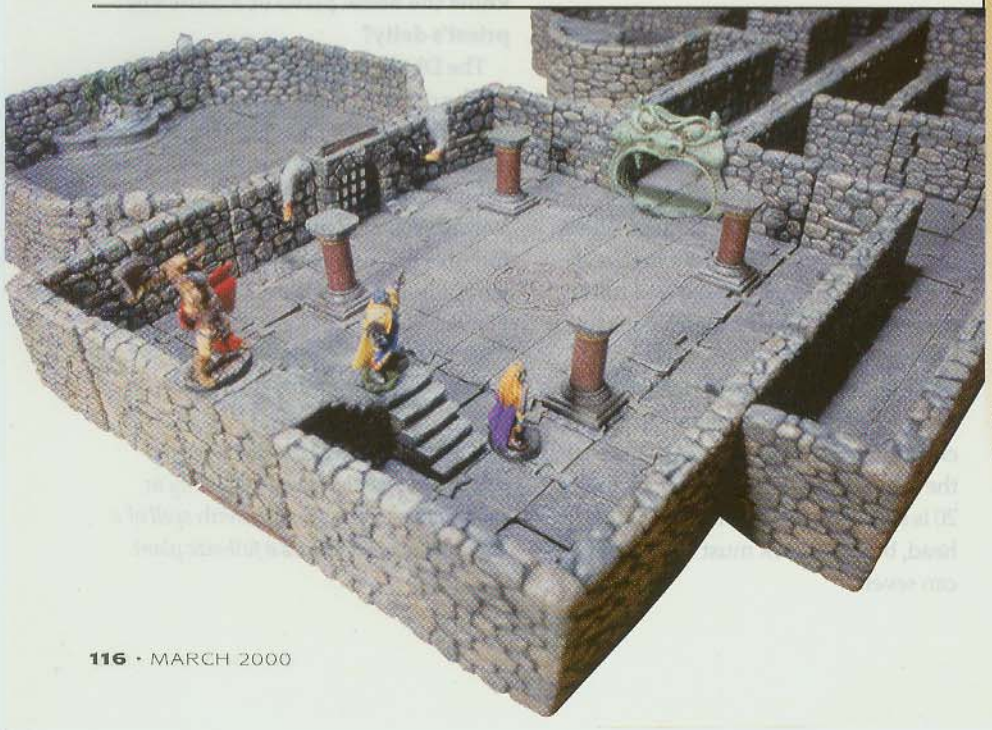
Moving the Miniatures: When the characters aren't in combat, let the players take turns moving their miniatures their normal walking movement rate.

If you use terrain like the MASTER MAZE sets, your players will soon learn to check for traps whenever they discover an unusual feature, like this glyph.

What the Players See

Even though both the DM and the players are looking at the same terrain, all the players know for sure is that the room has pillars, smoking torches, a portcullis, a demon archway, and of course the entrance steps. Naturally, the players can also see beyond the entry room, but the DM can simply cover those areas with sheets of paper if desired.

Even novice players will be wary of what might be hiding behind the pillars, but clever ones will wonder who keeps the torches lit and what the portcullis keeps in (or out). Really cautious players will be sure their characters don't step on any weird runes, too.



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Make sure each player shows the path the character takes; that way, you know whether to roll for hidden doors, pit traps, or other secrets.

Traps & Glyphs: Even if you draw your rooms on paper or a mat, make a habit of drawing glyphs, runes, and other decorations in your rooms. That way, the PCs might not think twice about walking across a warded floor. On the other hand, don't be surprised if your players soon learn to check for traps each time they come across such a feature.

Clever DMs use a normal wall until a secret door is revealed.

Secret Doors: Watch secret and concealed doors carefully. When a player places an elf within two squares (10 feet) of one, make a secret roll to determine whether the character detects the door. Don't let the players see you roll—unless you're one of those clever DMs who rattles the dice now and again to keep them guessing.

Pillars & Other Obstacles: While the players can easily see behind a pillar or wall that you've placed, remember that their line of sight is not the same as their characters. Thus, if you have a hobgoblin hiding behind a pillar, just keep the miniature hidden behind the DM's screen until a character (not a player) moves into a position to see the monster. If a character like our reckless elf actually turns her back on the hobgoblin, keep in mind that other characters might see the dirty backstabber move to attack her and call out a warning. If one does, consider reducing the hobgoblin's bonus for attacking from behind.

These are simple tricks, but keeping them in mind helps you build suspense with little more than the difference between what you know and what the players must find out.

When the thief turns her back to the lurker's pillar, the DM places the hobgoblin's miniature in the room.

Unfortunately for the barbarian, stepping on the *glyph of warding* is a big mistake.

Once surrounded, the hobgoblin keeps his back to the pillar to avoid receiving what he was about to give: a nasty backstab.

What the DM Knows

In addition to the hobgoblin's hiding place (1), the DM knows that the portcullis (2) opens only for good-aligned priests or paladins, for it protects an abandoned shrine of a benign water spirit. The DM also knows about the secret door to the right (3) and the *glyph of warding* (4) in the center of the room, but there's so much else in this chamber that the players are likely to be distracted. All the DM must do is pay attention to where they move their miniatures each round. Unless the players are aware of an impending combat, there's no need to roll initiative; each player can simply move his or her miniature in turn.

Lese Majesty

By Johnny L. Wilson

K is for Kingdom

Remember those first frustrating cities of the original *SimCity*? Entropy kicked in, your population kept emigrating off your computer screen, and you couldn't figure it out. That's the way you'll feel when you first try *Majesty*, a simulation of a fantasy medieval setting in which you face ratmen, minotaurs, and skeletons instead of abstract crime rates, taxes, and traffic congestion.

You start with a castle keep to serve as your command headquarters. From the keep, you can order the construction of buildings, as in *SimCity* or *Caesar III*. You can also establish the value of rewards for either attacking different monsters or exploring certain areas. Winning the game requires a delicate balance of defending your kingdom against invading hordes of monsters and exploring the map to reach certain objectives.

Clicking on each existing or new building individually enables you to recruit warriors, wizards, rangers, and rogues or establish research priorities a la *Age of Empires*. Visiting the guilds allows you to monitor the progress, health, and current objective of every member of the guild. Inspecting inns, shops, and marketplaces lets you examine the computer-controlled visitors who are using the facilities and gauge the effectiveness of each edifice. Inns allow for healing, weapons and armor are available at blacksmith shops, and one can find healing potions and artifacts in the marketplace. Naturally, the marketplace also contributes to the overall tax base.

INN AND OUT

It's a good idea to place inns on the borders of your explored territory. This way, your adventurers can retreat to the inn and heal from unwelcome encounters before continuing to explore.

I is for Influence

Of course, such a description sounds suspiciously like playing *Age of Empires*, *Warcraft*, or *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms*. Unlike these typical real-time strategy games, however, it isn't possible merely to lasso your combat units with a cursor and send them off to do your bidding. The rangers, rogues, and warriors in *Majesty* have "minds" of their own. Like the nobility of an earlier era, they demonstrate their fealty only when there is something in it for them. Instead of offering titles and land, however, you must invoke your will by setting a bounty for attacking specific monsters or buildings and offering a reward for exploring a given territory. As ruler, you can choose the reward amount for a given action. Then, you set a flag either to place a bounty on a monster's head or to prioritize a portion of the map for exploration. The program determines on a unit-by-unit basis whether the risk-to-reward ratio is sufficient to send heroes in that direction. Hence, *Majesty* is more about influencing combat than about engaging directly in combat or not.

Once you think about it, though, that makes sense. As a DM, you're influencing the player characters without directly controlling them. If you force them to do exactly what you want, that wouldn't be very interesting. In reality, you're setting up situations that lead them in a direction, then watching what they do. It's a lot like *Majesty*.

FLAGGING ATTENTION

In *Majesty*, you must flag objects that demand the attention of your minions, whether those be areas to explore, monsters to attack, or buildings to destroy. Often, you must destroy buildings to recover artifacts, rescue royalty, or meet the victory conditions.

S is for Spellcasting

Building temples or wizards' guilds and towers are required to attain basic spellcasting capability. Each guild or temple placed on the map begins with a low-level spell or spells. Upgrading these facilities enables the casting of more complex and powerful spells. Naturally, the upgraded spells have a price; they are significantly more expensive as they move up the mana chain. It is also possible to add new spells by constructing a library. Although the spells associated with the library are pretty basic, they can be of immense value whenever the gold reserves are low.

Once the spells become available, the gray tool bar at the bottom of the screen assumes the color associated with the wizard or cleric. Clicking on the spell icon first and then on the intended target allows spells to be cast swiftly and efficiently. Indeed, once the spell is selected from the spellcasting toolbar, it is no problem to cast the spell repeatedly, as long as there is gold in the coffers to pay. Naturally, constructing, upgrading and enchanting the magical edifices not only allows for spellcasting directly from the toolbar, but also allows all of your clerics, monks and wizards to cast those spells while you are engaged elsewhere on the map.

V is for Victory

To win, you must destroy a given number of structures, find the right artifacts or persons, defeat a major villain, or attain a certain character level. The easiest—but not always fastest—way to win most scenarios is to build overwhelming numbers of heroes and guardhouses. Upgrade every building as fast as possible, and trust that you can beat any wave of invaders in a war of attrition.

Majesty offers a very different feeling than the average strategy or roleplaying game in a fantasy world. It is similar to being a Dungeon Master or playing a simplified version of *Birthright*. In fact, if you were to translate some of the experiences in *Majesty* into actual D&D® encounters, you'd likely end up with a table of random encounters like the one that accompanies this article.

Random Encounters Inspired by *Majesty*

Roll 1d8

1—Cloaked and hooded figures (1d8) AC 8; MV 12; T2; hp 11; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short bow); SZ M; ML 12; INT average (8); AL CG; XP 35.

These figures appear to be highwaymen, but they are actually rogues from a secret forest settlement. They are hiding from a ruthless lich queen who had enslaved them to garner spell components and artifacts prior to an attack on a neighboring kingdom. They have moved their entire village into the forest and try to draw intruders into the woods, where they have placed traps.

2—Figures resting beside a well or spring (1d12): AC 10; MV 6; 0-level; hp 3 (6 at full); THAC0 20; #AT 1/2; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SZ M; ML 10; INT average (8); AL CG; XP 7.

These figures hardly move except to reach occasionally for water. If attacked, they are so weak that they can attack only once every other round. *Detect magic* or similar spells reveal that the entire area is draining energy from both the lounging figures and the PCs at the rate of 1 hp per hour. If the PC search for the source, they find a small effigy of the king "drowning" in the water source.

3—Lone scout: AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; F2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long bow); SZ M; ML 12; INT very (12); AL CE; XP 35.

The scout spots the PCs first and begins to run. If the PCs take him down without killing him, he can be persuaded to explain to them the significance of the shard in his bag. The shard has no markings on it and looks like a broken piece of ordinary pottery. The scout explains that this is one of the seven shards that make up Brashnard's Ultimate Sphere. Though of powerful magic, none of the shards emanates magic until the sphere is assembled. Once assembled, the sphere allows its possessor to scry as per a *crystal ball*.

4—Avreid Bluesmirk (25th-level wizard): AC –4; MV 12; hp 88; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg special; MR 25%; SZ M; ML 16; AL CG; XP 20,000. Spells (5/5/5/5/5/5/4/4/3): 1st—*Detect magic, detect undead, feather fall, magic missile* (×2); 2nd—*Melf's acid arrow* (×3), *ray of enfeeblement, summon swarm*; 3rd—*fireball* (×2), *Melf's minute meteors* (×2), *phantom steed*; 4th—*confusion, Evard's black tentacles, fire shield, fire trap, plant growth*; 5th—*feeblemind, hold monster* (×2), *major creation, teleport*; 6th—*chain lightning* (×3), *conjure animals, geas;* 7th—*forcecage, simulacrum, statue, vanish;* 8th—*demand, glassteel, incendiary cloud, maze;* 9th—*meteor swarm, prismatic sphere, temporal stasis.*

Avreid doesn't attack the PCs unless he's attacked first. He is hopping mad about his stolen spellbook. If the PCs attack, he tries to cast a *geas* upon their leader to command them to recover his spellbook. If they do not attack, he offers to teach them some spells in exchange for recovering the stolen spellbook.

5—Elven rogues (1d8) AC 8 (Dexterity); MV 12; T3; hp 12; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); SZ M; ML 12; INT high (13); AL CE; XP 65.

If the PCs capture one of these rogues, he or she complains, "I don't have that wizard's spellbook. I'm not stupid enough to take it." Captured rogues must make an opposed Morale check against the PC's Strength (if physical threats and actions are used) or Charisma (if reason is applied) or else confess to the theft and reveal the book's hiding place.

6—Escaped slaves (1d10): AC 10; MV 12; 0-level; hp 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club or chain); SZ M; ML 12; INT average (9); AL CG; XP 7.

If the PCs desire, they can recruit the escaped slaves as allies by making an opposed Charisma check (using the PC leader's score) against the Morale of the slaves. If the check fails and the slaves do not join the PCs, there is a 60% chance they panic and attack, and a 40% chance that they attack for one round and flee.

7—Url-Shekk, the three-headed beast: AC 0; MV 9; HD 13+3; hp 94; THAC0 9; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-12/1-8 (bite/bite/bite); SD Immune to fire, +1 weapons to hit; SZ L; INT average (10); AL CE; XP 6,000.

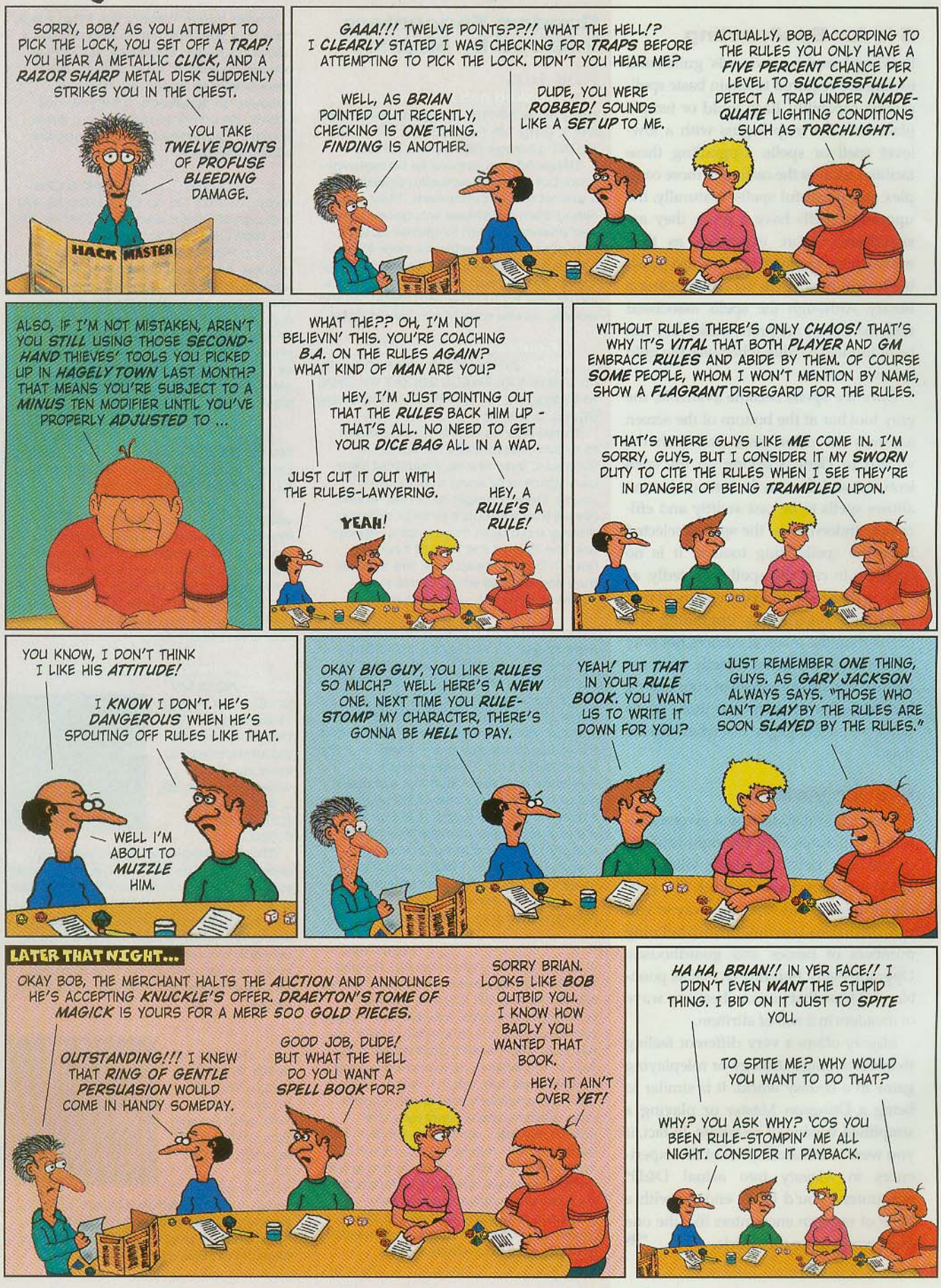
This three-headed beast was created to guard an infernal gate but failed to keep his prey from escaping. As part of its punishment, Url-Shekk must capture human souls to replenish those he lost one-thousandfold. The two heads on each side are smaller than the one in the center and cause less damage. All three heads always attack the same target.

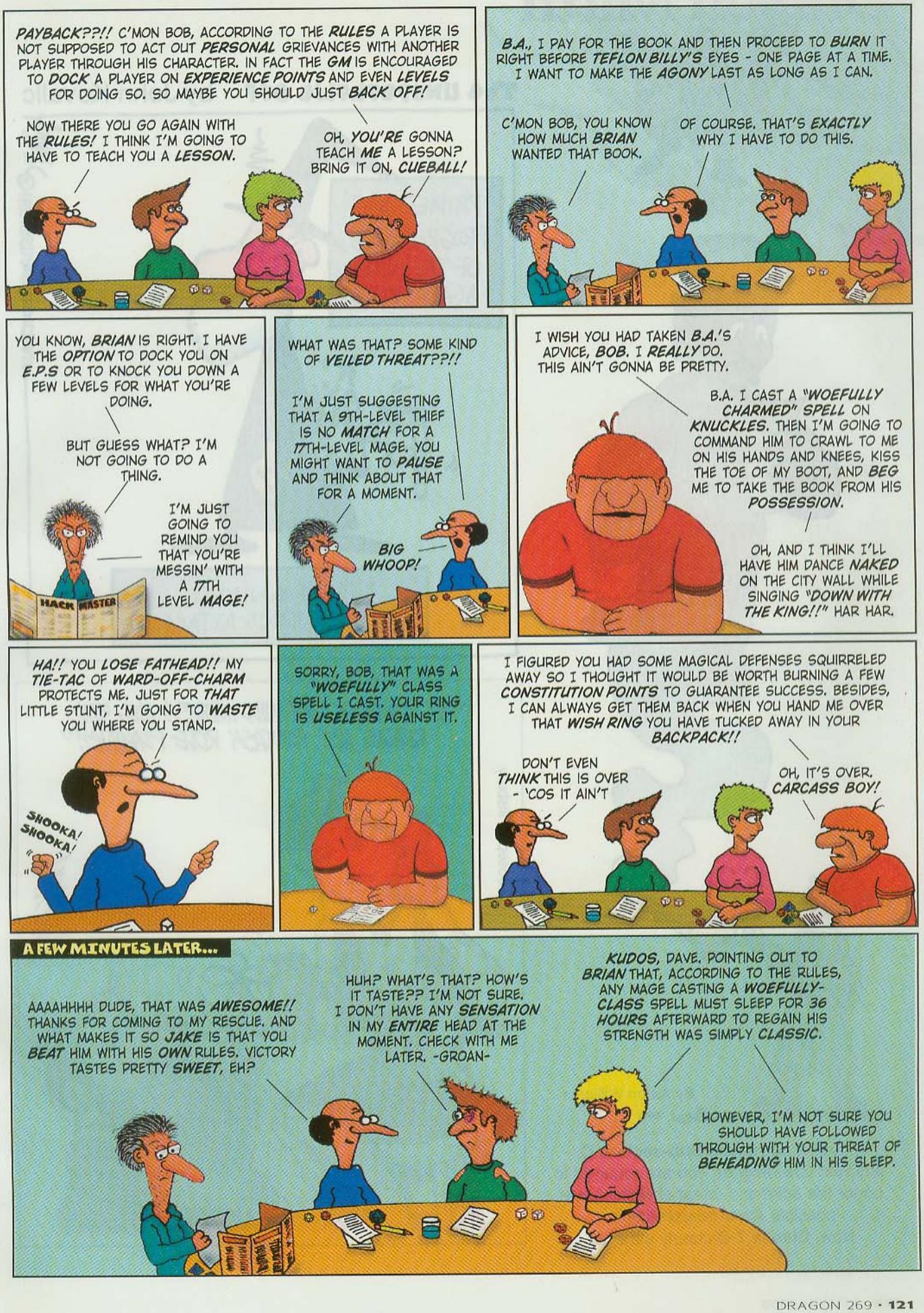
8—Rust Spitters (1d4+2): AC 6; MV 9; HD 4+2; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10 (acid spray); SZ L; INT average (8); AL CE; XP 175.

Rust spitters expel a viscous acidic phlegm at their victims. The acid dissolves the prey before they devour it. They are always found in groups of three or more.

Knights of the Dinner Table

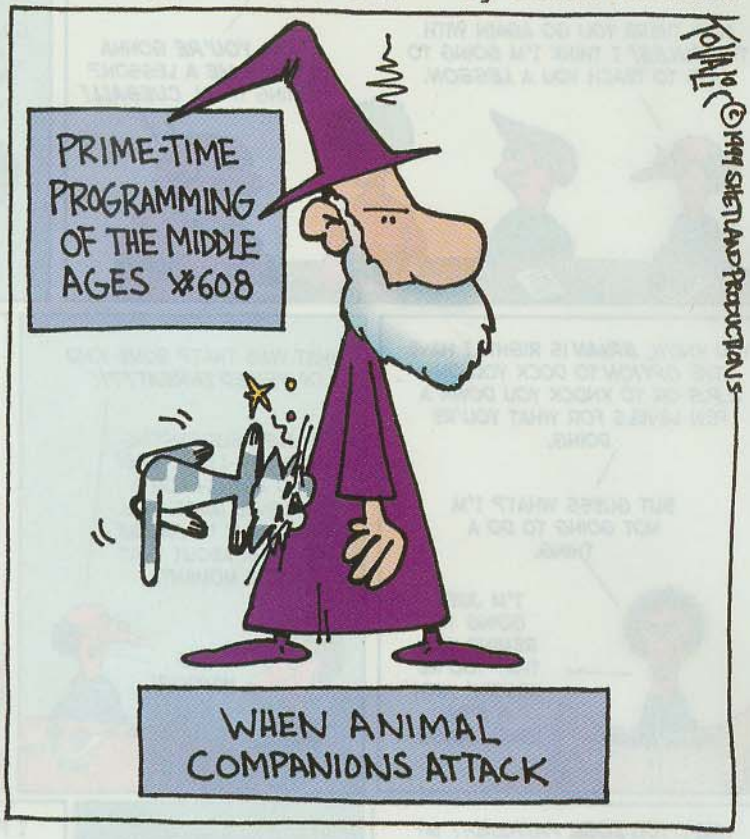
BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN


SORRY, BOB! AS YOU ATTEMPT TO PICK THE LOCK, YOU SET OFF A TRAP! YOU HEAR A METALLIC CLICK, AND A RAZOR SHARP METAL DISK SUDDENLY STRIKES YOU IN THE CHEST.
YOU TAKE TWELVE POINTS OF PROFUSE BLEEDING DAMAGE.
HACK MASTER
GAAA!!! TWELVE POINTS??!! WHAT THE HELL!? I CLEARLY STATED I WAS CHECKING FOR TRAPS BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO PICK THE LOCK. DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?
WELL, AS BRIAN POINTED OUT RECENTLY, CHECKING IS ONE THING. FINDING IS ANOTHER.
DUDE, YOU WERE ROBBED! SOUNDS LIKE A SET UP TO ME.
ACTUALLY, BOB, ACCORDING TO THE RULES YOU ONLY HAVE A FIVE PERCENT CHANCE PER LEVEL TO SUCCESSFULLY DETECT A TRAP UNDER INADEQUATE LIGHTING CONDITIONS SUCH AS TORCHLIGHT.
ALSO, IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, AREN'T YOU STILL USING THOSE SECOND-HAND THIEVES' TOOLS YOU PICKED UP IN HAGELY TOWN LAST MONTH? THAT MEANS YOU'RE SUBJECT TO A MINUS TEN MODIFIER UNTIL YOU'VE PROPERLY ADJUSTED TO ...
WHAT THE?? OH, I'M NOT BELIEVIN' THIS. YOU'RE COACHING B.A. ON THE RULES AGAIN? WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU?
HEY, I'M JUST POINTING OUT THAT THE RULES BACK HIM UP - THAT'S ALL. NO NEED TO GET YOUR DICE BAG ALL IN A WAD.
JUST CUT IT OUT WITH THE RULES-LAWYERING.
YEAH!
HEY, A RULE'S A RULE!
WITHOUT RULES THERE'S ONLY CHAOS! THAT'S WHY IT'S VITAL THAT BOTH PLAYER AND GM EMBRACE RULES AND ABIDE BY THEM. OF COURSE SOME PEOPLE, WHOM I WON'T MENTION BY NAME, SHOW A FLAGRANT DISREGARD FOR THE RULES.
THAT'S WHERE GUYS LIKE ME COME IN. I'M SORRY, GUYS, BUT I CONSIDER IT MY SWORN DUTY TO CITE THE RULES WHEN I SEE THEY'RE IN DANGER OF BEING TRAMPLED UPON.
YOU KNOW, I DON'T THINK I LIKE HIS ATTITUDE!
I KNOW I DON'T. HE'S DANGEROUS WHEN HE'S SPOUTING OFF RULES LIKE THAT.
WELL I'M ABOUT TO MUZZLE HIM.
OKAY BIG GUY, YOU LIKE RULES SO MUCH? WELL HERE'S A NEW ONE. NEXT TIME YOU RULE-STOMP MY CHARACTER, THERE'S GONNA BE HELL TO PAY.
YEAH! PUT THAT IN YOUR RULE BOOK. YOU WANT US TO WRITE IT DOWN FOR YOU?
JUST REMEMBER ONE THING, GUYS. AS GARY JACKSON ALWAYS SAYS, "THOSE WHO CAN'T PLAY BY THE RULES ARE SOON SLAYED BY THE RULES."
LATER THAT NIGHT...
OKAY BOB, THE MERCHANT HALTS THE AUCTION AND ANNOUNCES HE'S ACCEPTING KNUCKLE'S OFFER. DRAEYTON'S TOME OF MAGICK IS YOURS FOR A MERE 500 GOLD PIECES.
OUTSTANDING!!! I KNEW THAT RING OF GENTLE PERSUASION WOULD COME IN HANDY SOMEDAY.
GOOD JOB, DUDE! BUT WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT A SPELL BOOK FOR?
SORRY BRIAN. LOOKS LIKE BOB OUTBID YOU. I KNOW HOW BADLY YOU WANTED THAT BOOK.
HEY, IT AIN'T OVER YET!
HA HA, BRIAN!! IN YER FACE!! I DIDN'T EVEN WANT THE STUPID THING. I BID ON IT JUST TO SPITE YOU.
TO SPITE ME? WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO DO THAT?
WHY? YOU ASK WHY? 'COS YOU BEEN RULE-STOMPIN' ME ALL NIGHT. CONSIDER IT PAYBACK.
strip# 991215 ©JOLLY THE RULES


PAYBACK??!! C'MON BOB, ACCORDING TO THE RULES A PLAYER IS NOT SUPPOSED TO ACT OUT PERSONAL GRIEVANCES WITH ANOTHER PLAYER THROUGH HIS CHARACTER. IN FACT THE GM IS ENCOURAGED TO DOCK A PLAYER ON EXPERIENCE POINTS AND EVEN LEVELS FOR DOING SO. SO MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST BACK OFF!
NOW THERE YOU GO AGAIN WITH THE RULES! I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TEACH YOU A LESSON.
OH, YOU'RE GONNA TEACH ME A LESSON? BRING IT ON, CUEBALL!
B.A., I PAY FOR THE BOOK AND THEN PROCEED TO BURN IT RIGHT BEFORE TEFLON BILLY'S EYES - ONE PAGE AT A TIME. I WANT TO MAKE THE AGONY LAST AS LONG AS I CAN.
C'MON BOB, YOU KNOW HOW MUCH BRIAN WANTED THAT BOOK.
OF COURSE. THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I HAVE TO DO THIS.
YOU KNOW, BRIAN IS RIGHT. I HAVE THE OPTION TO DOCK YOU ON E.P.S OR TO KNOCK YOU DOWN A FEW LEVELS FOR WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
BUT GUESS WHAT? I'M NOT GOING TO DO A THING.
I'M JUST GOING TO REMIND YOU THAT YOU'RE MESSIN' WITH A 17TH LEVEL MAGE!
HACK MASTER
WHAT WAS THAT? SOME KIND OF VEILED THREAT??!!
I'M JUST SUGGESTING THAT A 9TH-LEVEL THIEF IS NO MATCH FOR A 17TH-LEVEL MAGE. YOU MIGHT WANT TO PAUSE AND THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A MOMENT.
BIG WHOOP!
I WISH YOU HAD TAKEN B.A.'S ADVICE, BOB. I REALLY DO. THIS AIN'T GONNA BE PRETTY.
B.A. I CAST A "WOEFULLY CHARMED" SPELL ON KNUCKLES. THEN I'M GOING TO COMMAND HIM TO CRAWL TO ME ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES, KISS THE TOE OF MY BOOT, AND BEG ME TO TAKE THE BOOK FROM HIS POSSESSION.
OH, AND I THINK I'LL HAVE HIM DANCE NAKED ON THE CITY WALL WHILE SINGING "DOWN WITH THE KING!!" HAR HAR.
HA!! YOU LOSE FATHEAD!! MY TIE-TAC OF WARD-OFF-CHARM PROTECTS ME. JUST FOR THAT LITTLE STUNT, I'M GOING TO WASTE YOU WHERE YOU STAND.
SHOOKA! SHOOKA!
SORRY, BOB, THAT WAS A "WOEFULLY" CLASS SPELL I CAST. YOUR RING IS USELESS AGAINST IT.
I FIGURED YOU HAD SOME MAGICAL DEFENSES SQUIRRELED AWAY SO I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE WORTH BURNING A FEW CONSTITUTION POINTS TO GUARANTEE SUCCESS. BESIDES, I CAN ALWAYS GET THEM BACK WHEN YOU HAND ME OVER THAT WISH RING YOU HAVE TUCKED AWAY IN YOUR BACKPACK!!
DON'T EVEN THINK THIS IS OVER - 'COS IT AIN'T
OH, IT'S OVER. CARCASS BOY!
A FEW MINUTES LATER...
AAAAHHHH DUDE, THAT WAS AWESOME!! THANKS FOR COMING TO MY RESCUE. AND WHAT MAKES IT SO JAKE IS THAT YOU BEAT HIM WITH HIS OWN RULES. VICTORY TASTES PRETTY SWEET, EH?
HUH? WHAT'S THAT? HOW'S IT TASTE?? I'M NOT SURE. I DON'T HAVE ANY SENSATION IN MY ENTIRE HEAD AT THE MOMENT. CHECK WITH ME LATER. -GROAN-
KUDOS, DAVE. POINTING OUT TO BRIAN THAT, ACCORDING TO THE RULES, ANY MAGE CASTING A WOEFULLY-CLASS SPELL MUST SLEEP FOR 36 HOURS AFTERWARD TO REGAIN HIS STRENGTH WAS SIMPLY CLASSIC.
HOWEVER, I'M NOT SURE YOU SHOULD HAVE FOLLOWED THROUGH WITH YOUR THREAT OF BEHEADING HIM IN HIS SLEEP.

Dragon Mirth™

The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic



By Aaron Williams

"...and, if you'll note **Sub-section C, Wishes: Granting of**, you are required to honor the *spirit* and *intent* of wishes over possible *literal* interpretation. Now, **Clause 7-B** clearly states..."

SHOP-Keep
by JOHN KOVALIC
WHOAH. THIS TSR SILVER ANNIVERSARY REALLY TAKES ME BACK.
RETURN TO THE TOMB OF
OH, THE MEMORIES. WHAT A TIME: THE EARLIEST DAYS OF ADVENTURE GAMING! THE BIRTH OF ROLE-PLAYING!
IT WAS A MAGIC TIME, FULL OF LIVING LEGENDS AND INDUSTRY GIANTS! IT WAS INTOXICATING!
PEGASAURUS GAMES
IT WAS A TIME OF BREATHLESS ANTICIPATION: EACH NEW RELEASE SEEMED GROUNDBREAKING. EACH NEW MODULE WAS REVOLUTION-ARY!
AHHHH, YES. WHEN FOLKS TALK WITH WONDER OF THE DIM, SHADOWY PREHISTORY OF OUR HOBBY, I CAN SAY I WAS THERE!
©1999 John Kovalic/Shetland Productions e-mail: john@kovalic.com DORK CENTRAL http://kovalic.com/dork/
THE RELEASE OF SECOND EDITION ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS?
DUDE! NO WAY! HE'S GOT TO BE TALKING ABOUT MAGIC: THE GATHERING ANTIQUITIES!
IF ANYBODY NEEDS ME, I'LL BE IN THE STOCK ROOM FEELING OLD. VERY, VERY OLD ...
DUDE-THERE WAS LIFE BEFORE PLANESCAPE? GET OUT OF HERE!
KOVALIC

Coming Attractions

March

In Sylvan Shadows

A Forgotten Realms® Novel
By R.A. Salvatore

Cadderly, scholar-priest of the Edificant Library, must leave his home to combat the evil unleashed by the Chaos Curse. In his quest he is accompanied by loyal friends, including the beautiful Danica, for whom Cadderly feels something stronger than friendship. To counter Castle Trinity's plans for conquest, the cleric and his friends enter the breathtaking forest of shilmista, where a new opponent leads an army of vile monsters.

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ISBN: 0-7869-1605-2

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Edited by Phil Athans

When armies of evil rise up from the seas around Faerûn, no one is safe. In a war that rages across every sea and onto every coast, there is more than one hero, more than one villain, and countless innocent victims. A young mage battles at the side of Khelben Arunsun to defend the city of Waterdeep from the invading forces. A merman struggles to fulfill his desperate mission to reach the Sea of Fallen Stars. And amid the horrors of war, a reef giant seeks to protect a fragile coral forest from destruction.

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By Bruce Cordell and Mike Selinker

This action-packed epic takes the world of the Diablo II computer game and translates it into the ultimate AD&D adventure. Create AD&D® heroes with a Diablo twist, then send them off to challenge terrors that were once found only on a computer screen. The adventure starts in Tristram, the site of the original Diablo game, then takes the heroes to the mysterious Cathedral—full of dangers and challenges pulled right from Diablo II but enhanced for a traditional roleplaying game experience.

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DIABLO

From the Designer

"Bruce and I slammed together the worlds of the AD&D game and *Diablo II* into the most blood-soaked adventure we've ever published. Plus, we stuffed in five new character kits, hundreds of new spells and proficiencies, over a hundred monsters, and more than a *million* magical items. The dungeon is about as intense as anything I've ever run. As I told my players that they saw something moving on their left and their right, one of them screamed, 'Hey! We want to rest!' Sorry, wrong dungeon."

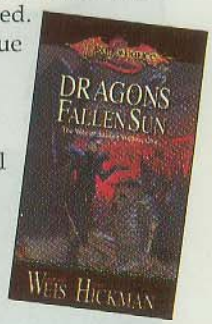
•Mike Selinker•

Dragons of a Fallen Sun

The War of Souls • Volume One
A Dragonlance® Novel
By Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

Forty years have passed since the devastating Chaos War, when the gods departed Krynn. Cruel and powerful dragons have seized control of Ansalon, dividing the continent among them and demanding tribute from the people they have enslaved. Now new heroes continue the battle against evil.

Change—for good or for ill—comes to the world. A violent magical storm sweeps over Ansalon, bringing flood and fire, death and destruction.



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The Apocalypse Stone

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All good things must come to an end—even a long-running AD&D campaign. *The Apocalypse Stone* gives Dungeon Masters the opportunity to change the face of their campaigns or bring their campaigns to a spectacular conclusion. This product also allows players to share an epic adventure that will challenge even the mightiest player characters.

The Apocalypse Stone is designed for very high-level characters (13+), in the tradition of *A Paladin in Hell* and *Return to the Tomb of Horrors*, and it offers both players and Dungeon Masters an opportunity to participate in a truly epic, and possibly campaign-shattering, adventure.

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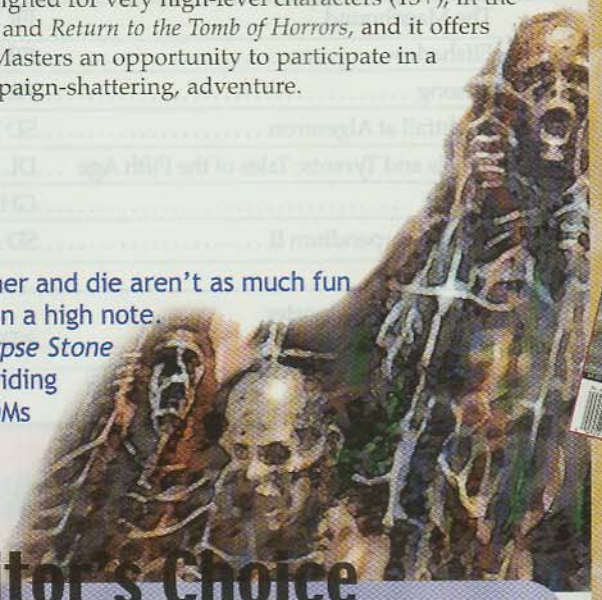
From the Designer

"Campaigns that just wither and die aren't as much fun as campaigns that finish on a high note. I approached *The Apocalypse Stone* with the intention of providing an adventure that helps DMs end their campaigns with a bang—literally."

•Jason Carl•



Editor's Choice

"The pleasure of mowing down a horde of zerglings with a gauss rifle while standing tall in your CMC-400 powered combat armor cannot be overstated. As a fan of the computer game who prefers tabletop roleplaying, I'm excited when the two experiences blend this well."

•Dave Gross•

STARCRAFT™

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By David Eckelberry, Shawn F. Carnes, and Bill Slavicsek

Introduce new players to the world of roleplaying with the popular STARCRAFT universe. STARCRAFT is Blizzard Entertainment's biggest computer game, with more than 1.7 million copies sold worldwide, and was named the bestselling game of 1998 by *PC Data*. Created in cooperation with Blizzard Entertainment, this STARCRAFT supplement brings the Zerg, Protoss, and Terran characters and creatures of the STARCRAFT universe to the game table using the ALTERNITY game system.

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From the Designer

"The STARCRAFT Adventure Game delivers the epic conflicts of your favorite computer game—with you and your friends as heroes! Join up with the Marines or the mysterious Protoss as you defend the galaxy from the menace of the Zerg."

•David Eckelberry•

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Tips for High-Level Heroes 270
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Cover by Tony DiTerlizzi

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April

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May

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Designer X
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Dwarven Fighter

Dennis Mize
Evil Wizard

Chaz Elliot
Orc

Jim Johnson
Elven Thief

Chaz Elliot
Ogre

Chaz Elliot
Hobgoblin

Nel Mckenzie & Chaz Elliott
Bugbear

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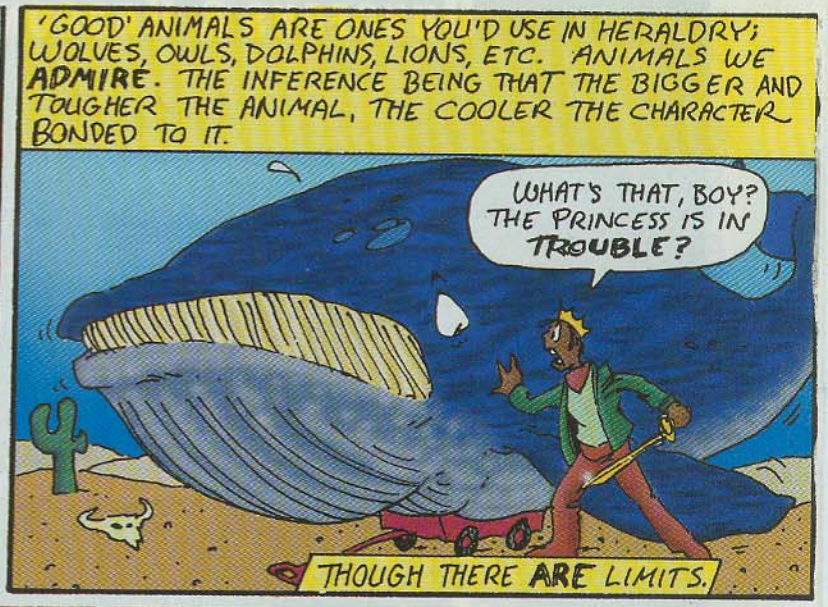
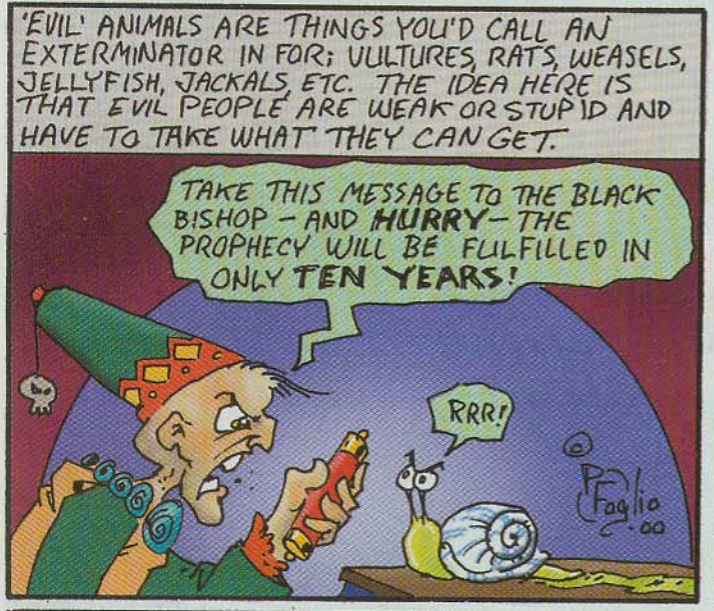
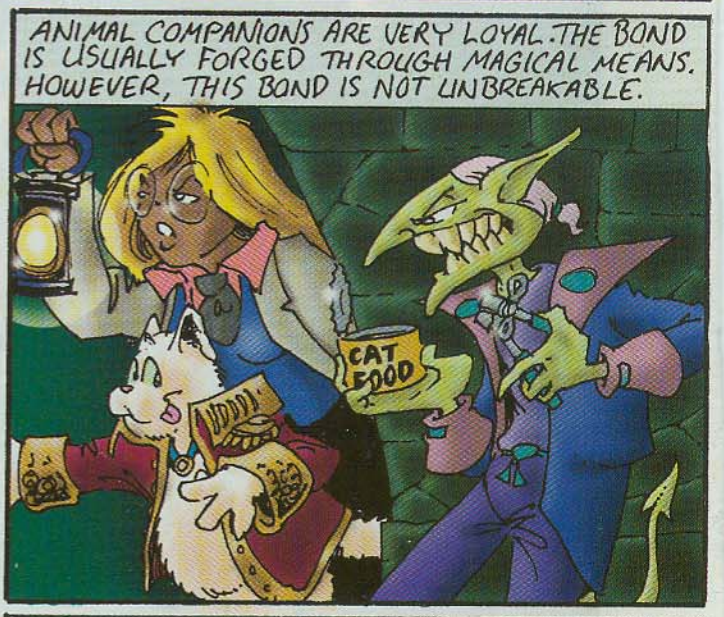
WHAT'S NEW WITH PHIL AND DIXIE

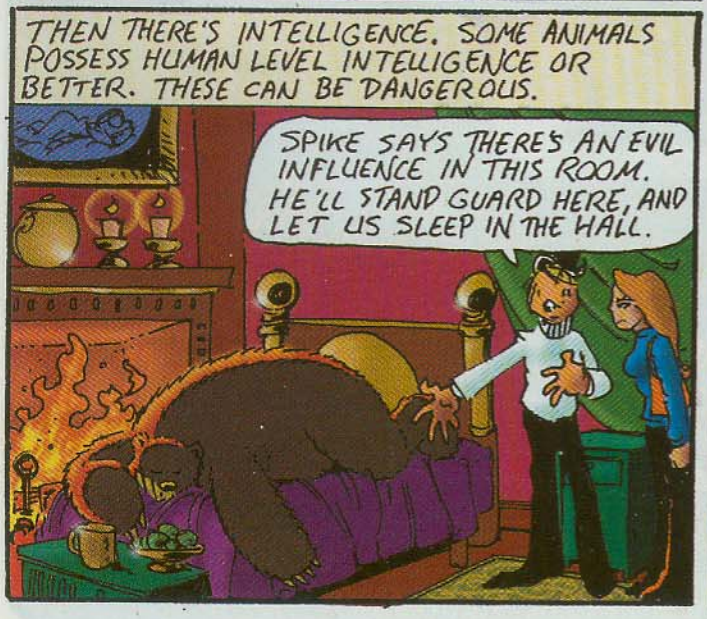
By Phil Foglio

HI. I'M LOOKING FOR AN ANIMAL COMPANION?
YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE! SO- WHAT'S YOUR ALIGNMENT?
THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?
HECK- YES!!
FIRST ONE FREE!
WHAT'S GNU
-ANIMAL PALS, MASCOTS, FAMILIAR AND EXOTIC MEATS
CHEAP


'GOOD' ANIMALS ARE ONES YOU'D USE IN HERALDRY; WOLVES, OWLS, DOLPHINS, LIONS, ETC. ANIMALS WE ADMIRE. THE INFERENCE BEING THAT THE BIGGER AND TOUGHER THE ANIMAL, THE COOLER THE CHARACTER BONDED TO IT.
WHAT'S THAT, BOY? THE PRINCESS IS IN TROUBLE?
THOUGH THERE ARE LIMITS.


'EVIL' ANIMALS ARE THINGS YOU'D CALL AN EXTERMINATOR IN FOR; VULTURES, RATS, WEASELS, JELLYFISH, JACKALS, ETC. THE IDEA HERE IS THAT EVIL PEOPLE ARE WEAK OR STUPID AND HAVE TO TAKE WHAT THEY CAN GET.
TAKE THIS MESSAGE TO THE BLACK BISHOP - AND HURRY - THE PROPHECY WILL BE FULFILLED IN ONLY TEN YEARS!
RRR!
Foglio '00


ANIMAL COMPANIONS ARE VERY LOYAL. THE BOND IS USUALLY FORGED THROUGH MAGICAL MEANS. HOWEVER, THIS BOND IS NOT UNBREAKABLE.
CAT FOOD


THEN THERE'S INTELLIGENCE. SOME ANIMALS POSSESS HUMAN LEVEL INTELLIGENCE OR BETTER. THESE CAN BE DANGEROUS.
SPIKE SAYS THERE'S AN EVIL INFLUENCE IN THIS ROOM. HE'LL STAND GUARD HERE, AND LET US SLEEP IN THE HALL.

END

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